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MY THOUGHTS ON MUSICAL MUSICIANS

H. H. STATHAM

Mus. Th 3275 P

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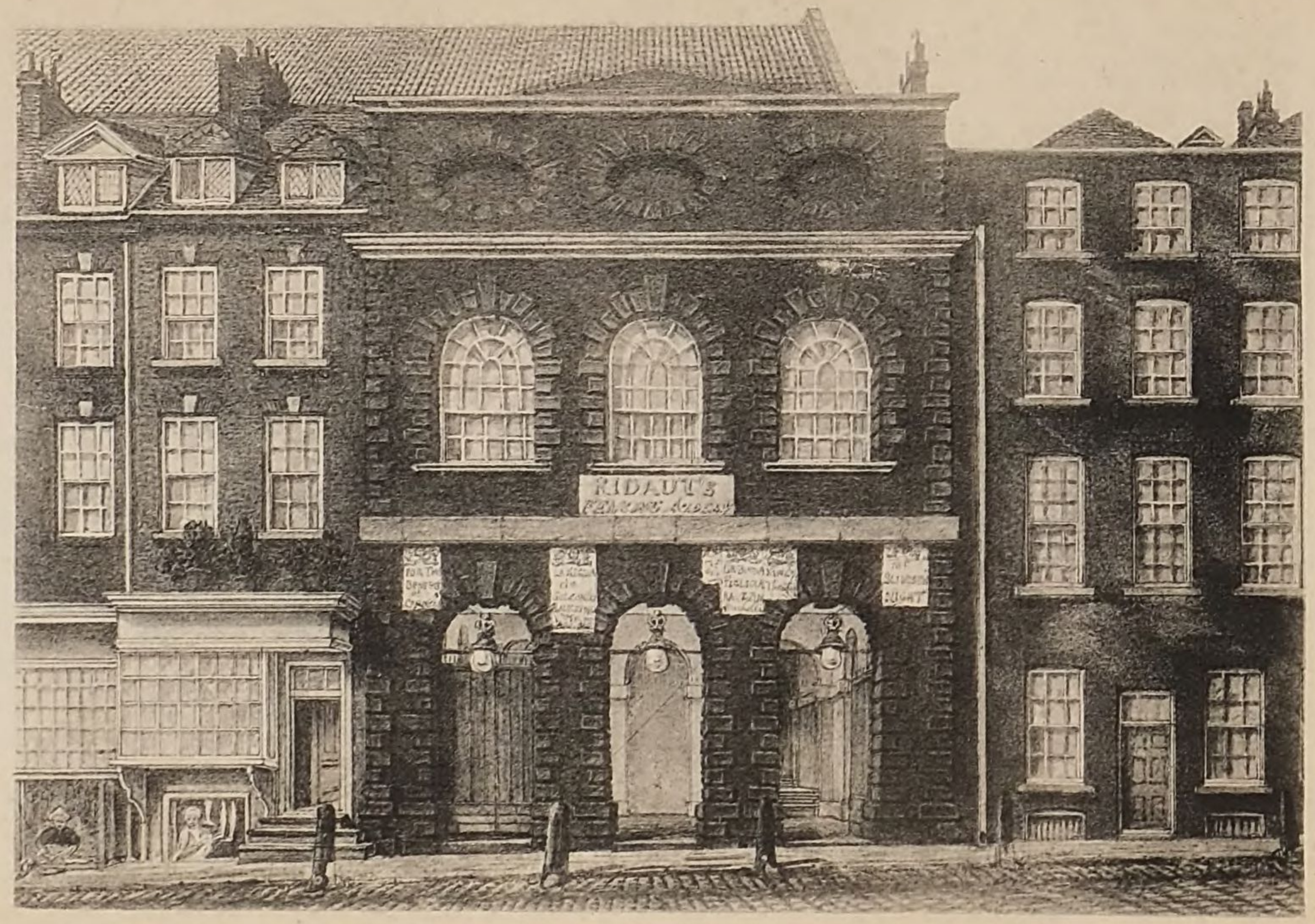
MY THOUGHTS

ON

MUSIC AND MUSICIANS

Rondoformen A B A B A d. A B^c B A.

Dock bör här märkas att de olika teman som avlösa varandra
inte skapa någon konflikt el. etablera (sällan) något samspel.
Formen ingen plats för djupsinnighet el. stark känslosamhet
och rondots. bruka vara fylld av enbart musik. spelglädje.



ENTRANCE FRONT OF HANDEL'S OPERA-HOUSE IN THE HAYMARKET.

[*See page 118*]

DESIGNED BY VANBRUGH; BURNED DOWN IN 1789.

From a Drawing by Capon, in the Crace Collection, dated 1783.

Anna Black,
Tonekonstens mästare

MY THOUGHTS

ON

MUSIC AND MUSICIANS

BY

[Henry]
H. HEATHCOTE STATHAM

"Music can be translated only by music. Just so far as it suggests verbal thought, it falls short of its highest office."

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

LONDON
CHAPMAN AND HALL, LD.
1892

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As the sky-brightening south wind clears the day
And makes the massed clouds roll,
The music of the lyre blows away
The clouds that wrap the soul.

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

O what is this that knows the road I came?

ROSSETTI.

I DEDICATE THESE

"THOUGHTS" ON MUSIC

TO

WILLIAM POLE, F.R.S., Mus. Doc.

AS A TOKEN OF RESPECT

TO ONE WHO COMBINES IN AN UNUSUAL DEGREE

CRITICAL INSIGHT INTO THE Art

WITH ACCURATE KNOWLEDGE

OF THE Science

OF

Music.

PREFACE.

THE first and longest chapter in this book is an expansion of an unwritten "Friday Evening Lecture" delivered at the Royal Institution on June 2nd, 1882, under the title "The Intellectual Basis of Music." Of the remaining chapters, that on Handel appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* in the time of Mr. John Morley's editorship, and is reprinted as originally written, with the addition of some more detailed critical remarks on *The Messiah ;* the essay on Beethoven also appeared in the *Fortnightly* about the same time, but has been considerably rewritten and added to. The chapter on Bach is reprinted from the *Edinburgh Review*, but with considerable additions, chiefly in reference to the organ works. The greater part of the chapter on Mozart also appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*, but with it is incorporated part of a more recent article in the *Fortnightly Review*, written on the appearance of the English translation of Jahn's *Life of Mozart*. That on Schubert, Chopin, and Liszt is reprinted nearly as it appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*, as also the following chapter on Wagner. The short chapter on Sterndale Bennett is based on an article contributed to *Fraser's*

Magazine the month after the composer's death, under the title, "The Place of Sterndale Bennett in Music." The chapter "About the Organ" is now first published.

The intention of the essay on "Form and Design in Music" was to furnish such a brief but comprehensive outline of the meaning and conditions of the art of music as might be useful and acceptable to persons of general culture, not specially students of music, who wish to know enough of it to understand the form and enter into the meaning of the instrumental compositions of the great masters of the art. The chapter on "The Organ" gives some more detailed information in regard to an instrument which has been my own special study and enjoyment.

The chapters on eminent composers are essentially critical in their aim, but in their original form as articles in periodicals a certain amount of biographical and personal information was incorporated with most of them, with the idea of rendering each essay a kind of comprehensive portraiture of the composer as artist and man; and this degree of biographical element I have retained, though it is for the most part merely what is to be found in accepted biographies, because my experience is that the class of general readers, to whom these essays are partly addressed, do not read lengthy biographies of musicians, and are mostly little acquainted with even the leading facts in the lives of the great composers; while the estimates of the personal characters of the composers dealt with here are my own deduction from the admitted facts of the biographies.

The main object of the essays, however, is critical, and I am not without hope that some of the critical judgments suggested in these pages, even where they run counter to the received opinions of the day, may be of some interest to musicians. They are at all events not lightly or hastily formed; and one special object kept in view throughout the book has been to oppose and discountenance what I consider one of the great fallacies of modern musical criticism, viz. the "progress" fallacy, which regards every change in musical style as a necessary step in a consistent progress from a lower to a higher development of the art. So completely has this heresy taken possession of recent musical criticism, that the intellectual position implied in the old literary sarcasm—"Which is the greatest poet, Homer or Virgil? Homer, by a thousand years"!—is all but reversed in regard to music; the abstract and judicial estimate of a composer's genius, or of the æsthetic soundness of any special treatment of music, irrespective of date or historical relation, seems all but abrogated; the last new device in the art is the best. What the modern critic is capable of in the way of this kind of logic may be exemplified by a quotation from an article on "Programme Music," in Grove's *Dictionary of Music*, signed by a well-known "advanced" musician and critic, who observes, "That the taste for music 'that means something' is an increasing, *and therefore a sound one*, no one can doubt who looks on the enormous mass of modern music that comes under that head." The italics are my own. Further comment would be cruel.

In attempting to form and express critical judgments on music, I can at all events claim for myself (whatever the claim be worth) that I have always been able to keep my judgment entirely clear from the influence of passing fashions in musical taste. If I may be permitted the egotism of adducing one instance of this, I may say that at the time when Mendelssohn-worship was still at its height, when I was hardly out of school, I entirely refused adherence to it, and maintained, as I do now, that Mendelssohn, though a beautiful and poetic composer within his own lines, was too deficient in constructive power to take rank with the few great musicians of the world; and I well remember pouring out the vials of my youthful wrath on the head of an older friend, who, at a concert where Mozart's *Requiem* was followed by the *Lobgesang*, exclaimed as the latter began, "Ah! one soon forgets Mozart!" (for thus, oh youthful reader of the present day, we used to talk of Mendelssohn then). I have lived to see the critical weathercock go right round the compass in this respect, and to find myself defending my original estimate of Mendelssohn against detraction as wholesale, as uncritical, as stupid, as was the blind adulation formerly lavished upon him.

As Mendelssohn-worship has gone, so will Wagner-worship go, only that the fall of Wagner will be greater, because his principle and method were essentially false (which could not be said of Mendelssohn), and his pretensions much more magniloquent.

That there will be a reaction against the present admira-

tion for romantic rather than constructive music I feel certain; and the signs of it are in the air already. Musical America has for some time prided itself on being more Wagnerian even than the Germans, yet a short time since I saw a quotation from a Boston paper complaining that "we do not hear enough of the music of the eighteenth century"; and in the *Times* critique on the Hereford musical festival of this year I noted the significant admission, *à propos* of an apparently unsatisfactory performance of the *Requiem*, that "it is curious that, of all the great composers, Mozart, who is always regarded as the incarnation of youthfulness, is the one whose works are most difficult to all but mature artists." If the present generation is beginning to find that out, one may hope that it will in time find out a good deal else about musical art which seems to have been temporarily forgotten.

H. H. S.

London,
October, 1891.

ERRATA.

Page *sixty-four*, first line of music, last bar, for  read 

Page *seventy-nine*, line *twenty-seven*, for "(Ex. 31, A)" read "(Ex. 34, A)."

Page *one hundred and seventy-six*, line *four from bottom*, for "Chacones" read "Chaconnes."

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

ON FORM AND DESIGN IN MUSIC 1

CHAPTER II.

HANDEL 110

CHAPTER III.

BACH 154

CHAPTER IV.

MOZART 217

CHAPTER V.

BEETHOVEN 262

CHAPTER VI.

SCHUBERT—CHOPIN—LISZT 314

CHAPTER VII.

WAGNER 359

CHAPTER VIII.

STERNDALE BENNETT 414

CHAPTER IX.

ABOUT THE ORGAN 428

INDEX 469

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MY THOUGHTS

ON

MUSIC AND MUSICIANS.

CHAPTER I.

FORM AND DESIGN IN MUSIC.

WHAT is music? Scientific investigators, such as Tyndall, Helmholtz, and others, have analyzed and grouped the physical phenomena connected with sound; but such analysis has really no more to do with the function of music as a mode of artistic expression than a discussion on the origin of speech has to do with literature. Certain facts in connection with the formation and relation of musical tones may (as we shall see) have an indirect bearing on our theories as to the scope and powers of music; but the genius of the composer as exhibited in his music, and the enjoyment of the composition by the hearer, are alike independent of any knowledge of the physics of music, of which most of the great composers were probably entirely ignorant. The musician arranges and combines a certain set of sounds—classified on a definite system—into a composition, the form and character of which apparently arises from and reflects a mood of his own mind, and in turn arouses a somewhat similar mood or state of mind in his hearers. So far, however, the definition would not necessarily imply anything in the nature of art, which

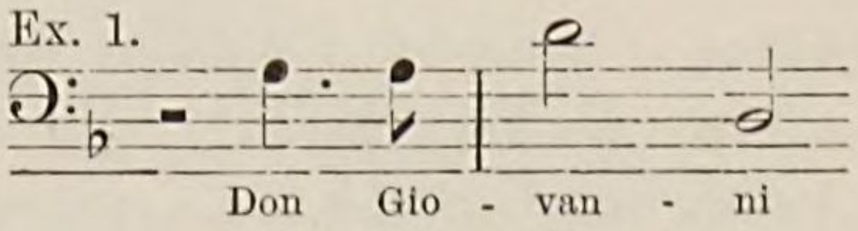
music is generally recognized and felt to be; it might be merely an emotional utterance analogous to weeping or laughter—natural expressions of feeling which have also the faculty of arousing in others emotions of sorrow or joy, less intense perhaps in degree, but similar in kind to those which gave rise to these expressions on the part of the principal actor.

Mr. Herbert Spencer, in an essay published some time ago, on *The Origin and Function of Music*, has, however, striven to show that music is directly derived from the natural variation of inflexion in the speaking voice under various states of feeling. The following quotation from the essay in question forms perhaps the most typical illustration of his position :—

> "If, supposing her to be in an adjoining room, the mistress of the house calls 'Mary,' the two syllables of the name will be spoken in an ascending interval of a third. If Mary does not reply, the call will be repeated probably in a descending fifth ; implying the slightest shade of annoyance at Mary's inattention. Should Mary still make no answer, the increasing annoyance will show itself by the use of a descending octave on the next repetition of the call. And supposing silence still to continue, the lady, if not of a very even temper, will show her irritation at Mary's seemingly intentional negligence by finally calling in tones still more widely contrasted—the first syllable being higher and the last lower than before."

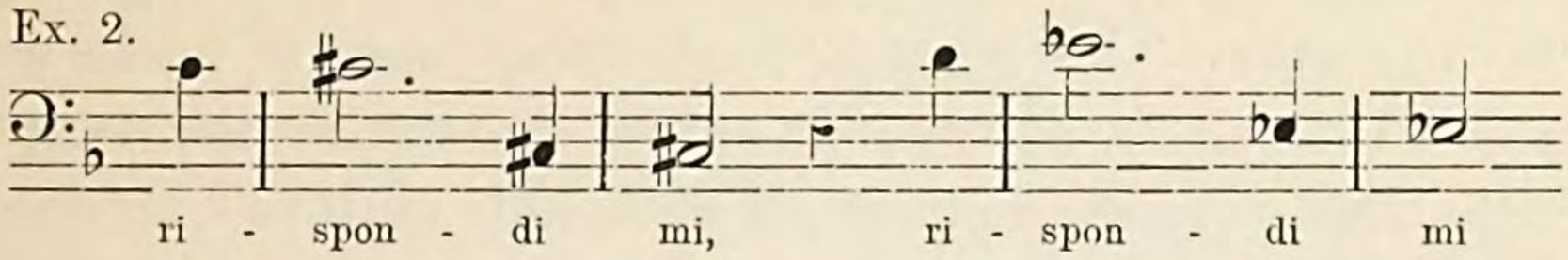
This is no doubt a very suggestive passage, as are other illustrations of the like nature in the same essay ; and many passages in music might be cited which seem to support the idea that, where strength of expression is desired, the musician does show the same tendency as the speaker, to employ considerable variations of pitch. As a good instance we might quote the Statue's first address to Don Giovanni, in the last scene of Mozart's opera—

Ex. 1.



and further on, when the Don remains speechless—

Ex. 2.



But it is going quite too fast to accept such instances as a proof of the derivation of music from the inflections of the speaking voice. Another passage, from the same composer's *Requiem*, will perhaps throw a new light on the subject:—

Ex. 3.



There is no personal feeling or personal appeal here—nothing declamatory: what is the meaning then of these large intervals? They are to suggest the idea of space and vastness; they are a matter of grandeur of design; and this characteristic of wide spacing is to be noted over and over again in the instrumental works of the great composers, in those which are purely abstract music, and make no pretence to declamatory meaning of any kind. It means breadth of style and design, expressed in the treatment of sound, just as we recognize breadth of style and design in the large-limbed figures of Michael Angelo, or in the treatment and massing of architectural design. It has as much direct connection with ordinary habits of human speech, as grandeur of style in drawing has with ordinary habits of human action; as much, and no more. And when Mr. Spencer goes on to say that no other theory than his own can account for the preference we

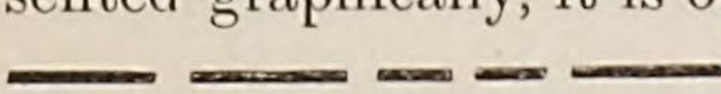
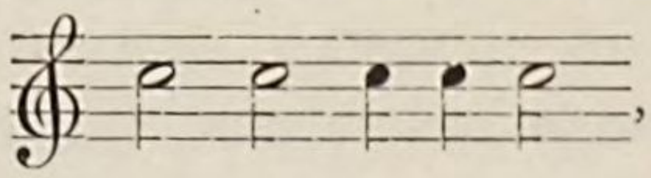
feel for certain qualities of sound, and that "it is generally agreed that the tones of the human voice are more pleasing than any others," he gives himself away, and, if he is not arguing in a circle, he is at all events illustrating the danger which besets even a man of exceptionally cultured intellect in writing about music with an evidently only superficial knowledge of it. No musician would have written that sentence: it is one of the commonplaces of non-musical people. The violin is capable of more poignant and intense expression, and a greater range of it, than any human voice; and I think most musicians would agree with me, that we would give up the best choral performance for an equally fine orchestral one, if we had only the alternative of one or the other.

The illustration of the effect of spacing, in quotation No. 3, coupled with the reference just now made to architecture, may together suggest what is the æsthetic ground-work of music. The art is one which, in the first place, deals with proportion and extension in sound, as architecture and ornament deal with proportion and extension in space. Like architecture, therefore, it is a metaphysical art, which does not in any way imitate the physical facts of nature, but imitates those abstract qualities of proportion and relation which are intellectually perceived as existent behind the physical facts. So far is music from having any direct relation to nature, that the very physical peculiarity which distinguishes what we class as musical sounds from those which are unmusical, from mere "noises" in fact—viz. the regular rhythmic period of the vibrations which compose the sound—is one which is never met with in natural sounds, except as an accident or a very abnormal occurrence. Scarcely any of the birds, though popularly credited with "singing," really produce musical tones, and the few which do are noted by explorers and naturalists as phenomena. Mr. Spencer makes the suggestion that "the four-toned recitative of the early Greek poets was really nothing more than

the slightly exaggerated speech natural to them, which grew by frequent use into an organized form." He could hardly have made a more unhappy stumble in his endeavour to find arguments for his naturalistic theory of music—the "bow-wow" theory, we may call it, to adopt the jargon of the philologists. What idea we have about the music of the Greeks is confused, and to a great extent conjectural; but if there is one fact about it that may be said to be positively settled, it is that the musical scale of the Greeks, which is partially the basis of our own, was directly and professedly based upon numerical proportion; an idea absolutely at variance with that of the evolution of a musical scale out of the natural variation of the pitch of the human voice in declamation.

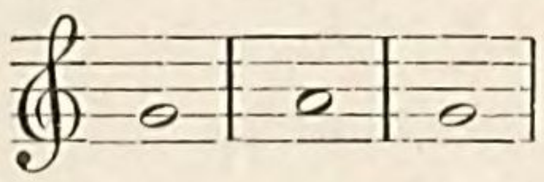
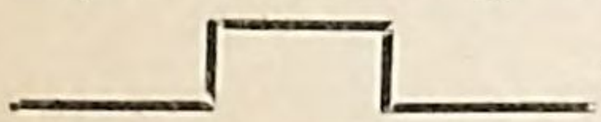
But if music may be compared to architecture, in that it deals with the abstract properties of proportion, extension, and combination, it comes closer to our feelings than architecture in that it is intimately connected with our own organization, not merely in being a form of expression or voice (for so far we may go with Mr. Spencer's view), but in being based on rhythmical movement, a quality so intimately connected, not with inorganic nature, but with organized life, and with human action and habit of movement more especially; insomuch that the love of rhythmical action seems to be inherent in humanity. Let me once again emphasize the cardinal fact (passed over by Mr. Spencer as a mere side issue), that the very essence of musical tone consists in the rhythmical series of its vibrations, a fact never to be lost sight of in the significance of its bearing on the philosophy of music. As the vibrations which produce the musical tone are rhythmical, so the successions of tones which produce music are in their turn rhythmical, in the main: as in architecture, the rhythm may be broken for a special purpose of expression; but the special purpose must be obvious, and its expression must not be allowed to intrude largely on the general rhythmical ordinance, or both

architecture and music, properly so called, will soon be lost for want of organic coherence of form.[1]

The rhythm of architecture consists in equal division in space, that of music in equal division in time; but while the first is a stationary rhythm, the latter is rhythm in movement, and hence the more intimate sympathy with music of our own nervous system, in which rhythmical movement (as in the ordinary action of walking) is an inherent necessity. But between extension and proportion in space, and extension and proportion in time, exists one fundamental distinction in regard to our apprehension of each—a distinction which has a most important bearing upon the æsthetic of music. The nature of this distinction may be shown by a very simple illustration. There is a system of signalling largely employed now, in which meanings are conveyed by the marking of long and short intervals, by flashes, sounds, or the waving of flags. Suppose this method of signalling to be represented graphically, it is obvious that if the following marks,  , two long, two short, and one long, represented a special word or sentence, anyone who understood the meaning of that would also understand the meaning of this,  , if the notes were struck on a piano. But the important distinction in our apprehension of them is this: that while the sign apprehended by sight can be taken in at a glance, that which is apprehended by sound requires a certain period of time for its development, and we are only conscious of one note at a time, instead of perceiving the whole at once. Therein lies the whole necessity for the extended development of a musical theme; the need for the "repeat" sign almost invariably affixed to the first portion of a composition in the "Sonata form" (whereof more anon), and which by the uninitiated is

[1] Wagner's denial of the importance of rhythm is dealt with in another chapter.

often, I believe, regarded as a "vain repetition," but which is a necessity in order to enable the hearer fully to appreciate the working of the composition, and to preserve the due proportion between the main idea of the composition and the episode, based on new combinations of the various elements of the music, which always commences the second division of the composition. But this will be better apparent when we come to examine, further on, the construction of a great instrumental composition.

But in music there is not only relation and proportion in extension or *time*, but also relation and proportion in place or *pitch*. Here again there is a direct analogy between sight and sound. The notes  produce a mental impression analogous to that represented by the diagram  : the rising a step and falling again. It must be observed, however, that although we speak of the middle note here as "higher" than the others, the idea that a note of quicker vibrations is "higher" is a convention of habit, partly perhaps derived from the method of musical notation ; just as we always regard the north side of a map as the "top," and the south side as the "bottom," because maps are for convenience usually drawn so, though apart from custom they might just as well be drawn with the south side uppermost. As far as notation is concerned, the treble notes might just as well be written on the lower part of the staff and the bass notes on the upper part. There is, however, an analogy, rather of fancy than of logic, which has probably led to the general acceptance of the idea of height in tones of rapid vibrations. The bass tones, or slow-vibrating tones, seem naturally to convey to the mind a sense of gloom and obscurity : in regard to such an extreme instance as the 32-foot pedal pipe of an organ no one would question this : while the sharp, thin sounds of rapid vibration as naturally suggest an idea of lightness and brightness. Now our whole

experience of physical nature leads us to associate gloom and obscurity with low situations, and brightness with lofty situations. Hence probably arose the habit of regarding the bass notes as low, and representing them so in notation. But the fact that this is a convention does not affect the idea that change of pitch is analogous to change of place. Whether we regard the north or the south as the top of the map, they are not the less the opposite quarters in regard to place; and equally it is true that variation in vibrating value of notes suggests the idea of change of place, of measurable degrees one way or another. The continued repetition of one tone suggests the idea of level progression, the change to another tone that of change to a different level, the greater in proportion to the change in vibrating value; and thus proportion in *place* and proportion in *time* form the two main elements in musical structure.

Proportion in place or pitch, however, can be musically regarded under two conditions: proportion between tones which are heard in succession, and proportion between tones which are heard simultaneously. The former is the physical condition of melody, the latter the physical condition of harmony. Now whether a certain group of tones simultaneously heard is or is not in harmony is a matter capable of physical demonstration—it depends on the numerical values of the vibrations; although, as we shall see later on, there are conditions under which combinations which are physically inharmonious may nevertheless be perfectly agreeable and musical to the ear. But the creation of a melody is a matter of pure æsthetic.

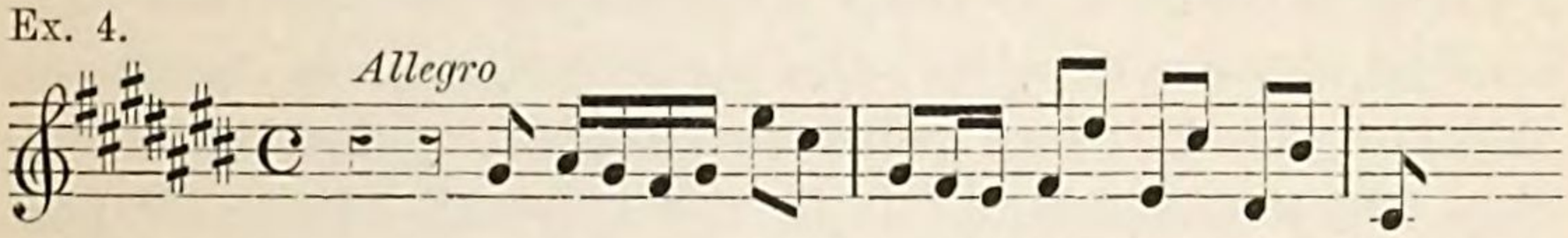
Melody may be defined as a succession of notes which are dependent upon one another, so as to form, in rhythm and in intervals, a musical sentence of distinctly marked character and expression, so that no note can be altered or removed without disturbing the balance and the organic unity of the whole. It is analogous to a sentence in literature—most directly perhaps to a line in poetry. The words "Opening

the of morn eyelids the under" are words, but not a sentence, though they are the component parts of the line—

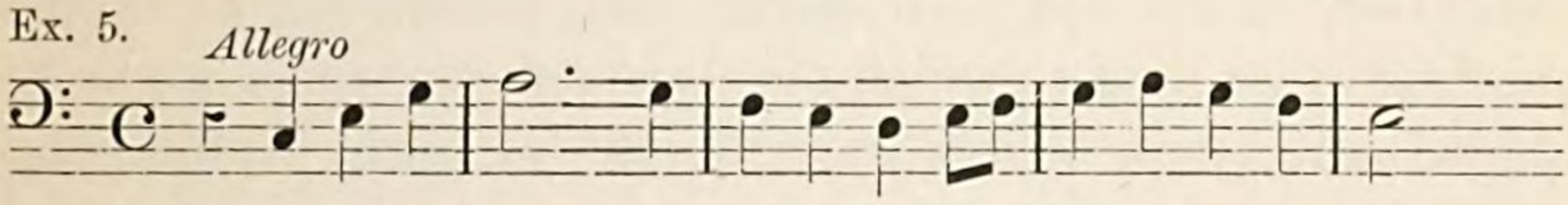
"Under the opening eyelids of the morn."

Similarly a sequence of notes is not necessarily a melody; there must be a relation of place, accent, and proportion between them, rendering them all manifest parts of one whole idea, a melodic structure of which no link can be spared. This is best illustrated by two or three examples:—

Ex. 4.



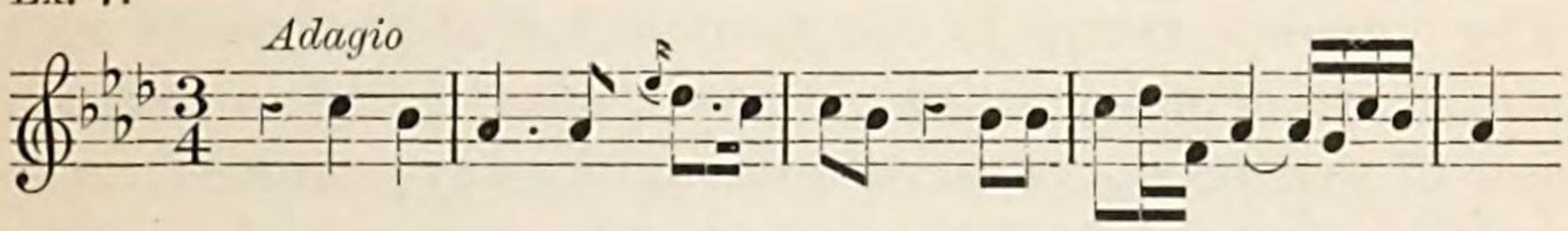
Ex. 5.



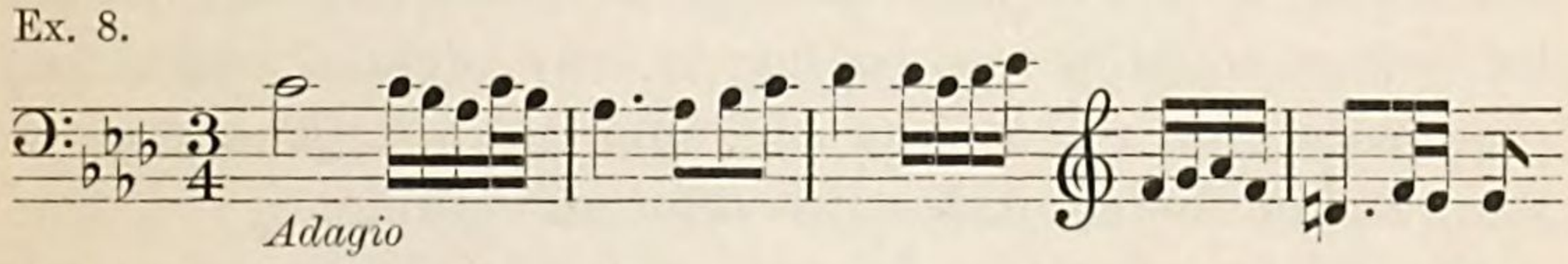
Ex. 6.



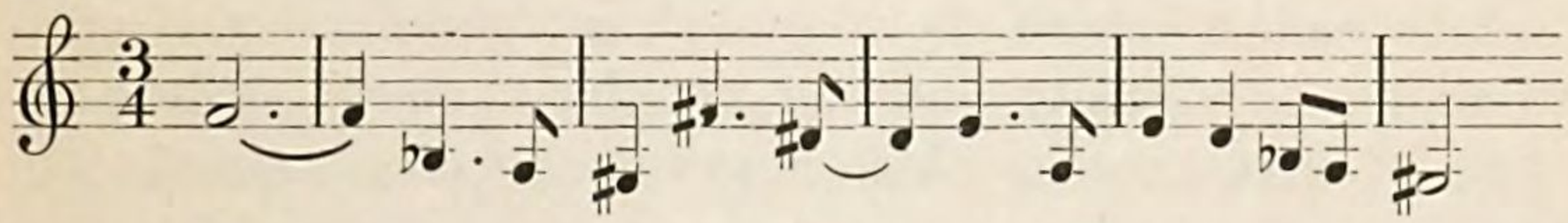
Ex. 7.



Ex. 8.



Ex. 9.



In these quotations, purposely taken from compositions of very various nature and style, it will be observed that in the first three there is a distinct rhythmic flux and reflux, the

second part of the melody following the first as wave succeeding wave, but that each of them has a distinct and special character as a whole. In Ex. 7 the rhythm and reflux is less prominent to the ear because of the slower time, but here also we feel that the second portion of the melody, after the "rest," is the necessary counterpart of the first strain; the whole is one idea with a predominating character and expression. The same is the case with Ex. 8, though here there is a rather less decided rhythm, a little leaning towards a *parlante* expression; this becomes less marked, however, when the melody (from a Sonata of Beethoven's) is heard with the regular pulsation of the bass which accompanies it in the original. But all these melodies, which are from works long recognized as of the highest order (and to which thousands of examples might be added), are characterized by symmetry of form, rhythm, and tonality, and by a certain coherence, more to be felt than expressed, which stamps each one of them as an organic whole. As an instructive contrast, the reader may take the cacophonous string of notes given in Ex. 9, which is put forth as a melody, but has no analogy in structure with those above quoted except in the mere fact that it consists in a succession of notes; these, however, have neither a common law of rhythm nor of tonal relation, nor any definite form or balance as a whole; the passage has, so to speak, neither beginning, middle, nor ending, in any organic sense, and there seems no reason why it should not wriggle on in the same fashion indefinitely: it is a formless thing.

Now, the production of a true melody which is an organic whole, such as those above quoted, is a genuine act of creation of a new entity, and the impulse to create such is one form of that impulse which is at the root of all artistic production—the desire in man to create something which shall be his own work, entirely new and distinct from anything already existing. And the power to create melodies each of which shall have its own clearly defined character and indi-

viduality is, more than any other faculty, the measure of the power and originality of musical genius. This will become apparent if we consider the sum of melodies created by the few musical composers of the first order, as compared with the works of those of a secondary or inferior order. Take, for example, the pianoforte works alone of Beethoven; we find in these a whole host of melodic creations, each of which is perfectly distinct and defined in its character, and resembles none of the others; so that to any one who knows these works each of the principal melodies stands out clear in the memory, as something *per se*, as a distinct entity, as different from the rest as one man whom we know is different from all the rest and not liable to be confounded with them. If we take even the most gifted of composers of the second order, such as Schubert and Mendelssohn, we find that they did indeed produce melodies of distinct and individual character, and of great beauty, but that the proportion of these in their works is much smaller: their creative power is more restricted, and a large proportion of their melodies have a decided family resemblance, a general beauty, but a lack of sharply defined character; the composers are more or less mannerists, in fact.

This is by the way. A more important point for us to note here, as carrying on our subject a step further, is that the quality of coherent organic form, which is the distinguishing character of a true melody, is also the essential condition of a true musical composition considered as a whole. Like the separate melodies, the composition of which they form the elements must be an organic whole, all portions of which must have their relation to one another and to the whole, so that no passage could be subtracted or altered without injuring the balance and consistency of the whole, or could be supposed to be a part of any musical organism except that with which it is connected. All parts must be interdependent, all details subordinated to a general design. That this is so, and *how* it is so, in the works of the

great composers, we shall see presently. In the meantime we may at this point be allowed to define the art of music, in general terms, as consisting in *organized and expressive tonal structure*. This definition again suggests the analogy of music with architecture, which is organized and expressive material structure; each of these arts being concerned with abstract qualities of proportion and relation, not with any imitation of nature. The popular talk sometimes heard about the "music of nature" is as false, in regard to any relation to the art of music, as is the once popular (and still not extinct) notion that the branching lines of Gothic vaulting were suggested by the appearance of the natural arch formed by an avenue of trees. But though this analogy between architecture and music is a real one up to a certain point, this organized tonal structure is superior to architecture in one important quality, viz. that it includes the power of emotional expression. Architecture, grand as it is, is dumb: music is phonetic (taking the word in the æsthetic, not merely in the physical sense). In the hands of a great master, emotion is expressed through constructed form—even the deepest and most poignant emotion. All the elaboration of detail in Beethoven's symphonies only serves to bring out with more intensity the appeal to our emotional feelings. But the further superiority of music over the other forms of abstract or non-imitative art is that it is not a dead but a living structure; it moves in response to our life, to the beating of our own hearts. And lastly, it is the most entirely abstract and ideal expression not only of emotion but of form and proportion. It represents form and proportion in their primary metaphysical elements, apart from all the fetters of material shows.

The highest and most complete music is that which combines the elements of emotional expression and artistic structure in equal proportion; in which neither does complexity of structure stifle expression, nor intensity of expression destroy the balance of structure. Compositions in

which this balance between the two elements of expression and structure is completely preserved are comparatively rare; on a large scale they are to be found only among the works of the few greatest composers, and not in all of them. But we may have considerable deviations from this central balance without losing the artistic value of music. We may have on the one hand structure which, as in some of Bach's fugues, or in his marvellous organ prelude on the chorale *Aus tiefer Noth*, is of the highest intellectual interest as structure, with but an inferior degree of expressive or emotional element; and we may have highly expressive music in free and irregular forms, though form must always be recognizable. To talk of a musical composition as "making up for deficiency in form by its poetic impulse" (an expression of modern criticism which I have seen in print) is to talk nonsense. Art *is* form, and to imagine anything worth the name of art as produced by poetic impulse apart from form is as rational as to imagine an organized being produced by a father without a mother.

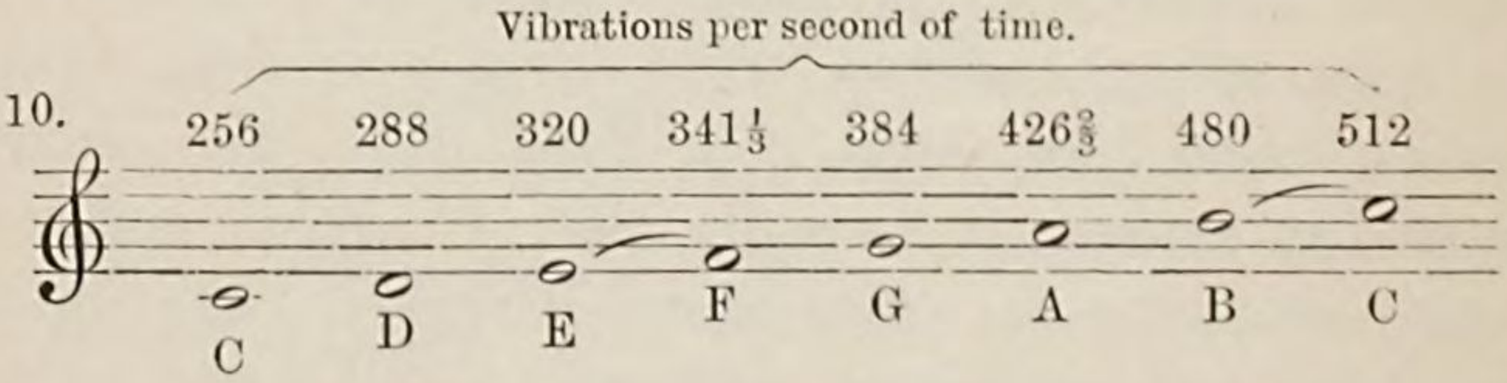
Musical structure on the larger scale, the structure of a whole composition, has two main elements: first, that of successive stages, like those of architectural design, showing proportion in extension; secondly, that of simultaneous combinations of tones—in other words, harmony. The first is governed by æsthetic considerations alone; but the latter is to a great extent conditioned by physical laws, and answers to construction in architecture. The highest triumph of the composer, in regard to harmonic structure, consists in the power of moving with apparent ease amid the restrictions imposed by physical conditions, as well as by various conventions which have arisen out of the various ways in which the physical conditions of harmony have been regarded at different stages of the art. And before we can appreciate the principal forms of musical structure, it is necessary to consider for a moment what are the materials with which this structure is built. The subject can only be touched upon in

the barest outline here, but it is impossible to understand the real meaning of musical form without a reference to it.

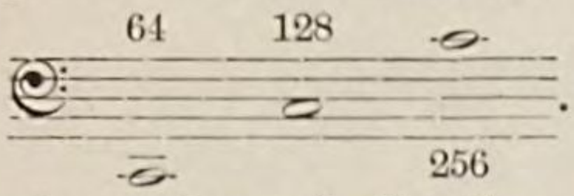
Every one knows that the notes used in music are represented by a scale (*scala*, ladder) of seven notes, which, with the repetition of the lowest note in a higher position, comprise what is generally termed an "octave" of notes (the chromatic scale is purposely omitted for the present); and every possessor of a piano knows that this octave of notes is repeated several times in succession to make up the number of notes which the pianoforte affords him. Now it is, I believe, the common idea, among those (not specially students of music) who trouble their heads about the matter at all, that this succession of tones called the "major scale" is a kind of natural phenomenon, forming the physical basis of music. This, however, as we shall soon see, is quite an erroneous idea. There are inherent physical relations between certain notes of the scale; but the whole, as it now stands, is a medium or vehicle contrived by man to produce music out of.

Annexed is the modern scale of C, with the proportionate

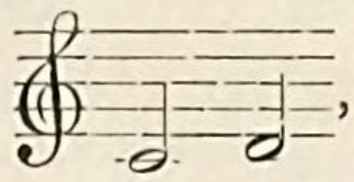
Ex. 10.



vibration numbers given above the notes.[1] The mere fact

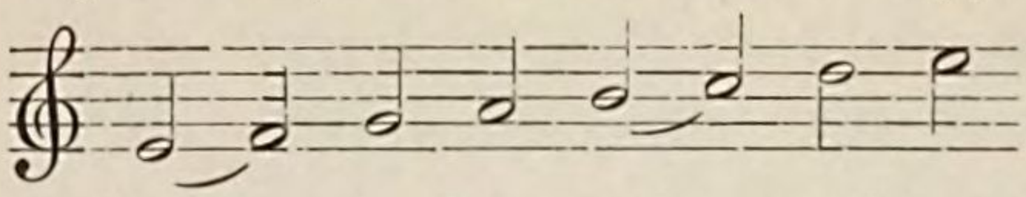
[1] The vibration numbers, as given here, represent a pitch rather lower than the present pitch in use in this country; but it is convenient, for the sake of round numbers, to take the C as derived from the low C of 32 vibrations per second, generally regarded as the lowest note that can be recognized as a musical tone. Doubling the vibrations for each octave, we get 

. As the question here is only as to *proportionate* numbers of vibrations, the precise pitch adopted for the comparison is of little consequence. This is about the pitch in use fifty years ago; it has been gradually sharpened in the desire to add "brilliancy" to the orchestra and the pianoforte.

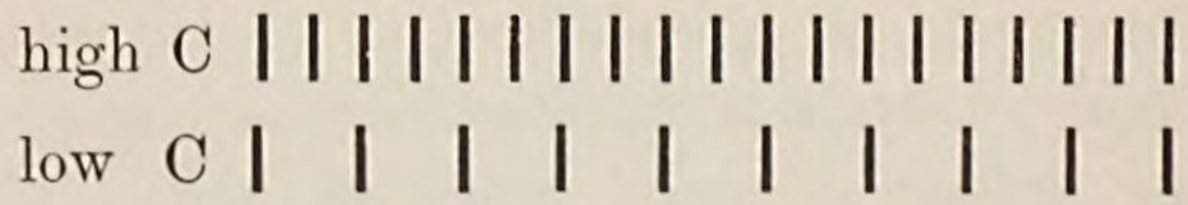
that there is such a large step between the number of vibrations in contiguous tones ought at once to suggest to the reader the question, why so few notes, when there are so many combinations possible? If there is a difference of 32 vibrations per second between  , why are there not 31 intermediate sounds, of 257, 258, 259, &c., vibrations per second respectively? The answer would be that there are, but our ears could not distinguish them. We know very well that an inch could be divided into a thousand parts, but a scale so divided would be of no use for ordinary measuring, because our vision is too coarse to distinguish such minute divisions; we can only, as it were, calculate them by the aid of a vernier. Before any practical handling of design in musical tones was possible, it was necessary to select, from all the numbers of possible notes, certain steps, as it were, in pitch (the steps of the *scala* or "ladder" of sound), which the ear could readily discriminate, which could be accepted as the material of musical composition, and which could readily be denoted by written signs: the latter a far more important point than is generally recognized, for without this power of denoting tones by written signs, musical composition in the higher sense would never have become possible.

The modern scale, as given above, is the ultimate result of this attempt to obtain a fixed system of tones; a result which is the growth of many centuries, and is a curious mixture of physical law with arbitrary adaptation. As most readers are aware, it consists of a succession of intervals, of which two, those between the third and fourth and between the seventh and eighth notes of the scale, are smaller than the rest, and are called "semitones," the other intervals being intervals of a tone each. The foundation of this scale was laid by the Greeks in the sixth century B.C. Their scale was seated, so to speak, differently from ours, and may be roughly represented on a modern pianoforte by a scale in the

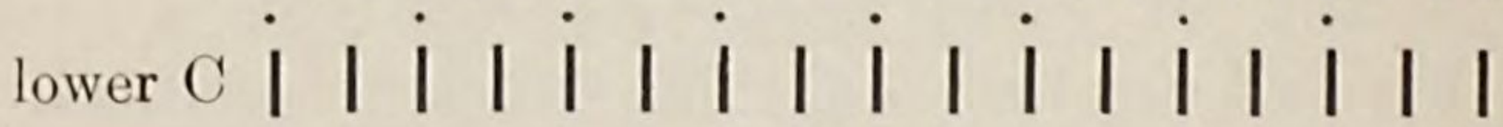
key of C (as we should now say), but commencing on E,



; but as the process of evolution of this scale would apply equally to a scale commencing on C, we may here, for the sake of brevity, trace its genesis in that form. Referring to Ex. 10, it will be seen that the number of vibrations for the high C is exactly double that of the low C. In other words, if we take a string of such a length as to give 256 vibrations to the second, and divide it into two equal halves, each half will give the octave C of 512 vibrations. If we now divide the string into three equal parts, two of those parts will give the note G, a fifth above the low C, the vibrations of the two being in the ratio of 2 to 3 in equal times. These two intervals, when the notes which compose them are sounded together, give the most perfect concords to be obtained from two simultaneously sounded notes; and for this reason, that they give a greater proportion of synchronous vibrations than any other intervals. A simple diagram will show this. If we suppose the upper row of strokes in this diagram to represent the vibrations of the high C, and the lower those of the low C, it will be seen that every second vibration of the upper note coincides with a vibration of the lower one.



If we make a similar diagram of the lower C and the G vibrations, we see that every third vibration of the G



coincides with every second vibration of the C. The same principle holds in intervals which are less concordant: the

simpler the numerical ratio of the vibrations, the more synchronous vibrations there are. Each pair of synchronous vibrations produces a slight reinforcement of sound, called a "beat"; but in the simpler ratios of vibrations this beat recurs too quickly for the ear to notice it as a separate phenomenon. As we come to more discordant intervals, in which the numerical ratios are less simple, the points at which the synchronous vibrations occur are further apart, the "beat" becomes so slow as to be distinctly perceptible; and on an organ, where the tones are sustained in their full strength as long as they are sounded, becomes sometimes rather irritating to the ear.

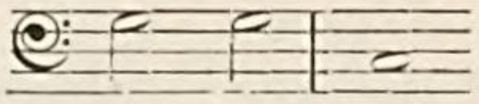
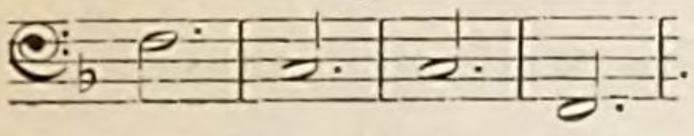
But we are anticipating. So far we have only got three steps of our ladder of sound, the two extreme notes and the G between them. But as we obtained the fifth, G, from the lower C, so we can reverse the process and obtain another note a fifth below the higher C, viz. F, the vibrations of which are again in the ratio of 2 to the 3 of the C. So far we are on the firm ground of physics. We have now got two tones, F and G, much nearer to each other, and the vibrations of which are in a tolerably simple ratio, 8 to 9. This interval, left by the two fifths formed from the upper and lower octave, the Greeks adopted as the normal division or step of their scale; and here the physical basis is only an indirect one. There was no absolute reason why that proportion of interval should be adopted as the normal tone; but it was a suggestion, and was adopted, and the Greeks have practically, as it has come about, imposed that tone-interval upon the whole of civilized music, just as they have imposed their perfected æsthetic form of the column and capital, in one shape or another, on the whole of civilized architecture. The next step was to introduce two notes of a similarly proportioned interval above C, D and E, and two others, A and B, above the G, in equal progression. The E comes very close up to the F, and the B very close up to the higher C, leaving small intervals rather less than our semitone, but

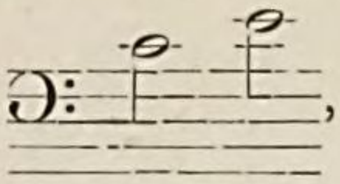
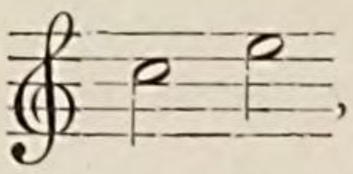
this is a fairly good and workable scale so long as melody alone is under consideration. But when we come to introduce harmony, and to sound various notes of the scale together, there is a stumbling-block. The interval of the third is one of the most frequently used in harmony, and the thirds between the first and third notes of the scale (C—E), and between the fifth and seventh (G—B), are the most important of all, as they serve to define the harmonies based on the two most important notes in the scale, the keynote and the fifth. But the succession of Greek tones C D E, and G A B, bring the E and the B too high up, too "sharp," to make correct thirds with the C and G respectively. The true ratio of vibrations in the harmony of a major third is as 4 to 5, but the succession of three Greek tones leaves the relation of the lower and upper one as 4 to $5\frac{1}{16}$. Accordingly the E in the modern scale is slightly flattened to make a true third with the C, and the B and A are both similarly flattened, the first to make a true third with the G, the second to make a true third with the F, the next most important note in the scale. We have now got all our major thirds in the scale right, but at the cost of having our whole tones slightly irregular in the melodic sense; those between C and D, F and G, and A and B, are the same as the Greek tone; those between D and E and between G and A are somewhat smaller; and we have had to give up our perfect fifth between D and A, which, owing to the flattening of the A, is now rather too small. The D is not altered, because it is more important that it should form a perfect fourth with the G, or rather a perfect fifth with the G of the octave below. But by this time the reader must see plainly that the musical scale is not an existence in the nature of things; it is a matter of artificial compromises, though it has answered its æsthetic purpose wonderfully well, and to the delight of mankind.

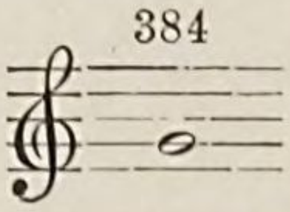
I have heard people, not musicians, argue that the major scale must be a natural thing, because it is so easily taught,

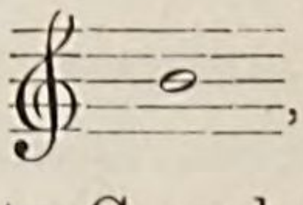
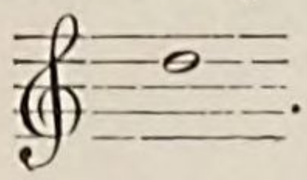
and it comes (they say) "so natural" to sing it, compared with the minor scale, which is, however, no more artificial than the major, though the fact of its being more difficult to sing by beginners is unquestionable. The reason for the apparently greater naturalness of the major scale to the uninitiated may be found partly (for this country) in the fact that most of our modern popular tunes are in major keys; all peals of eight bells are tuned in the major scale; and in these and other ways the ear gets familiarized with it. But the principal reason, I think, is this: both major and minor scales are naturally divided into two sections by the fifth, the most important and prominent note after the keynote,[1] and thus the ear divides the scale into two groups of four notes, commencing from the keynote and recommencing from the fifth. Now in the major scale the semitones are in the same place in each group, three tones and a semitone commencing from the keynote, three tones and a semitone commencing again from the fifth; whereas in the analogous two sections of the minor scale the semitones are not in the same place in each group. I have never seen this suggested, but I am convinced it is the real explanation of the fact that people can sing the major scale who cannot sing the minor scale.

There is no abstract reason why the upper note of the octave should be named the same as the lower one, and the series begun over again in the next octave under the same nomenclature. But though the octave C is not the same tone as the lower C, it is more similar in its effect on the ear than

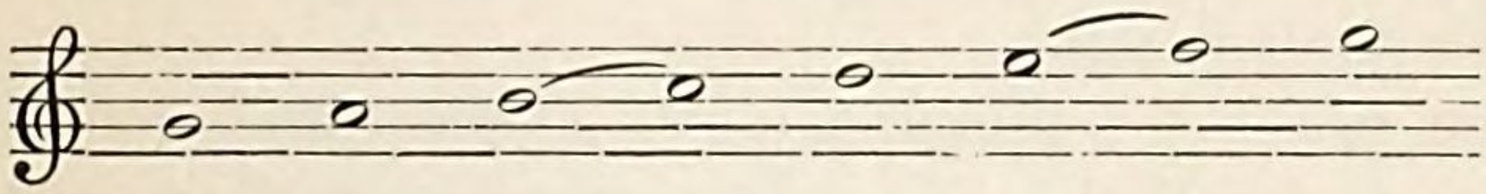
[1] Any one may observe how the fifth catches the untrained ear by listening to a non-musical worshipper trying to sing the bass in a hymn-tune. However he may flounder in the middle of the tune, he is quite sure of the fifth and keynote at the end, and sings out boldly  or whatever the key may be. Beethoven has caught at this in the exquisitely humorous passage in the *scherzo* of the Pastoral Symphony, where he represents the village band: the bassoon can only play the keynote and fifth: 

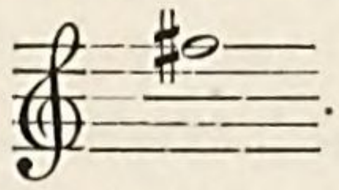
any intermediate note of the scale; and if a tenor voice sings  , a treble singer imitating the passage would naturally sing  , and would feel them as the same notes. And if we take this C by the same name in each octave, we have all the C's as a set of tonal sign-posts, marking out the recurrence of the tones which are in the simplest ratio of 1, 2, 4, 8, &c., and which, in each octave, stand in the same comparative relation to all the other notes of that octave. This immensely simplifies the nomenclature of tones, and emphasizes the fact that there is one particular series of tones which are more closely related to each other than the rest, and on which the position of the rest depends. From this arrangement has arisen the practice of calling the key in which a piece of music is written by the name of this governing note, which forms the commencement of the scale of notes of which the music is composed.

Here we enter on a new section of our subject, and have to see what is meant by *key*, and at the same time what is the origin of the extra notes of the scale, represented by the black keys on the piano. Hitherto we have been dealing only with a scale of which the first note is C. But as the making of the scale is only a matter of *proportion* in vibrations, not of actual pitch, which may vary indefinitely, we may, if we wish, for the sake of a variation in effect, take 

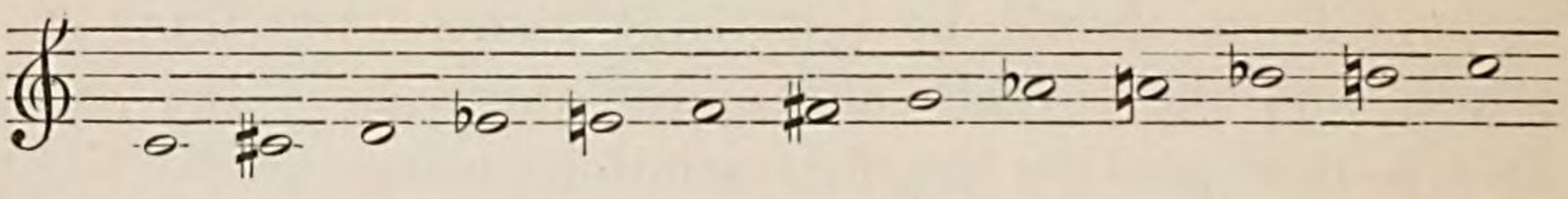
as the commencing note of the scale, and construct the same series of proportionate vibrations with that note as the starting-point. The third of the new scale will then be  , which, as we have already seen, is a true third to G, and the fifth will be  . But when we come to write out our scale

commencing on G, we find a hiatus in our nomenclature of the tones, for the note we have called F will not work in the proper relation to the G which is now the keynote of the scale. There should be semitones between the third and fourth, and the seventh and eighth intervals of the scale. In the new position the first semitone comes in the right place ; it is the upper semitone of the scale on C, used over



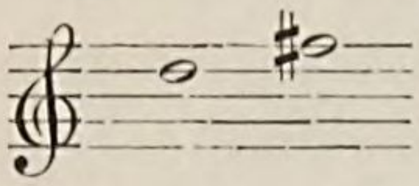
again as the lower semitone of the scale on G. But the upper semitone comes between the sixth and seventh notes, instead of between the seventh and eighth. We have therefore to raise the F half a tone to get the semitones in the right place. This is introducing an entirely new tone for which no name is hitherto provided ; and as we have adopted the letters of the alphabet consecutively for the scale of C, we have no letter left to come between F and G, and the only resource is to give the F a mark to show that it is altered, and call it F sharp,  . We have now a scale founded on G, exactly similar in its proportional relations to that on C, only seated a fifth higher ; and we call this a scale in the key of G. Similarly, retaining the F♯, we may found a new scale, commencing and ending on D, in which the F♯ will be retained (taking the same place in the D scale as the B takes in the G scale), when we shall again have to alter a note, the C, and call it C sharp, in order to get the semitone between the seventh and eighth notes of the D scale. So we may go on forming a new scale on each of the original notes of the C scale, in each case finding that we shall have to raise one note a semitone by the sign of "sharp" (♯), or lower it a semitone by the sign of "flat" (♭), in order to get the semitones in the right place in the scale, and render it susceptible of the same use in harmony as the

tones of the original C scale. We shall by that time have obtained practically a complete scale of semitones,



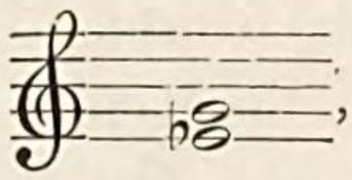
giving thirteen notes to make the complete octave, instead of the original eight.

The reason for this apparently illogical and complicated process is simply this: that the nomenclature of the scale was fixed in the early days of modern music, before the possibility or the desirability of repeating the same proportions of tones at a different pitch had occurred to any one. Like our musical scale, our musical notation has grown up by degrees through a series of tentative efforts, instead of being laid down from the first on a fixed plan; though it has answered its purpose wonderfully well, it is, like the scale itself, a compromise. Had it been foreseen that the elaboration of modern music would require these five extra notes, it might have been better to have had twelve letters for the nomenclature of the octave, running from A to L, and a separate sign for each of these notes; though this, on the other hand, would have introduced additional complications of another kind. The most serious disadvantage of the "sharp" and "flat" nomenclature is that it suggests to the learner a false idea as to the relations of notes. He regards F♯, for instance, as a modification of F; so it is in notation, but musically speaking *it has nothing whatever to do with F;* its true relation is with D, to which it forms the major third,



; and so with all the other sharp and flat signs.

The chromatic scale, evolved as has been described, enables musicians to write music in all keys, and to modulate from one key to another, in a written language which is a suffi-

cient approximation to the actual sounds desired for practical purposes, considering the average distinguishing capacity of the human ear. But it is far from representing all the minutiæ of intonation which are actually involved in modern music, or which are even theoretically true in a harmonic sense. The pianoforte keys represent the sounds indicated by the chromatic scale, but they do not represent all the notes theoretically required by the composer, nor even those actually used by singers or by players on instruments of which the tones are not fixed, such as the violin. For example, E ♭ and D ♯ are represented on the piano by the same key, which answers its purpose fairly well. But in reality, if we have an E ♭ making a true third below G,  , and if we are going to write in the key of B, the D ♯ in the combination  , struck on the same piano, would produce an exaggerated and inharmonious third, the true third to B being sensibly lower than E ♭. This has introduced a whole host of difficulties in the tuning of the organ and piano, resulting finally in the principle of so distributing the dissonances as to render all of them about equal and tolerable to the ear. On the piano the imperfection is little felt, and does not much interfere with one's enjoyment of music; but on the organ, where the sounds are fully sustained, the ear is always conscious of it. And the discrepancy between the notation and the actual sounds becomes often still greater in melodic passages, where delicate deviations are made for the sake of expression only. Putting together these disturbing elements of harmonic relation and of expression, we may say that a violinist with perfect execution and a fine ear, in playing the five phrases in Ex. 11 would probably play all the notes marked with an asterisk slightly different, though they are all represented by the same key on the piano. In "A," the C ♯ would be played as a true third to the A. In

"B," which is a passage modulating from G to D, both a violinist and a singer would probably give the C♯ a little

Ex. 11.

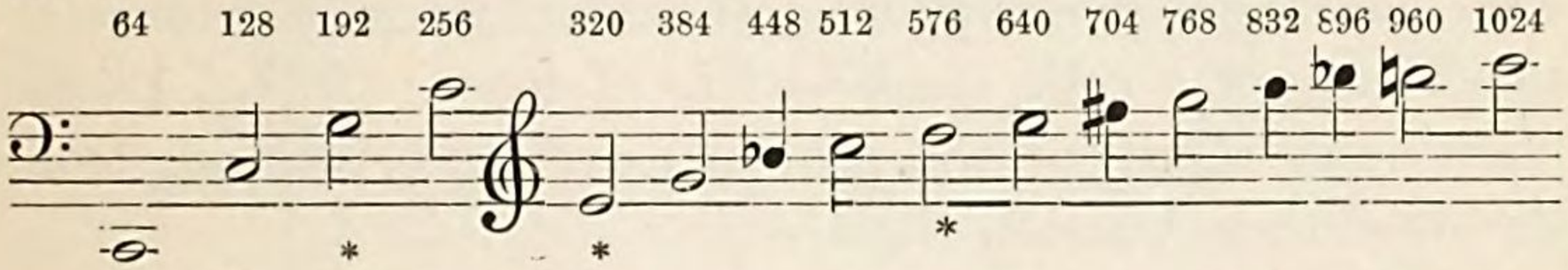


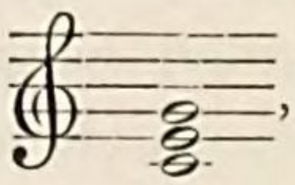
extra sharp, from the feeling impelling them to lean upwards, so to speak, towards the D. In "C," the C♯, a mere passing appoggiatura, would probably be played still closer to the D, a mere little "twitch" in taking the D, which is what the composer means, but the notation cannot represent. In "D," which is a passage in the key of A♭, the D♭ would be played in correct harmonic relation, a perfect fourth to the A♭, and rather higher than the C♯ in "A," perhaps practically the same as that in "B," though for a different reason. In "E" the D♭, again an appogiatura of expression only, unconnected with the harmony, would probably be played very close to the C, and the lowest in pitch of all the five. This example will serve to show how incompletely actual *nuances* of expression in the execution of music can be represented by our notation. But this discrepancy must in any case have been unavoidable. To have attempted a notation which would represent every possible *nuance* of performance would only have befogged us amid a medley of signs and symbols.

But there is another kind of partial relation between musical sounds and physical law to be touched upon—a relation which is more close and complete, and which has an important bearing on harmony. Not only is it the case that if you divide a string into halves you get its octave from one of the halves; but the string tends to divide itself into halves, into two sections of vibrations superinduced on the main vibration, and then again into still smaller sections,

producing higher or overtones which are faintly heard along with the principal tone. In No. 12 are given the notes which are ascertained to be produced as overtones from the C of 64 beats, with their vibration numbers over them, and it

Ex. 12.



will be seen that these vibration numbers proceed in the arithmetical ratio, 1, 2, 3, 4. Of these many overtones the first five or so may, under favourable circumstances, be heard by the naked ear, when carefully listened for; the others have been mostly detected by instruments made for the purpose of reinforcing particular tones. Here we seem on the threshold again of finding our scale sanctioned by physical law; there is a true physical unity in the arithmetical progression of the vibrations, and moreover we find that the second, third, and fifth of our scale are actually produced by these overtones; the second (D) three octaves higher, the third (E) two octaves higher, the fifth (G) one octave higher, than their proper places in the scale in reference to the 64-beat C (see the asterisks in Ex. 12). But, just as we seem in sight of land, we are again pulled up, for the F of our scale is not there, but in its place a nondescript note, called here for convenience F♯, but which does not even coincide with the F♯ proper in the scale of D, but is sensibly flatter; and the B♭ (which is also not strictly in tune) has nothing to do with our scale of C at all: so that the apparent promise of a physical basis for our scale is again snatched away from us. However, we have got something, and something very important in its relation to harmony; we have found that the major triad or "common chord," consisting of keynote, third, and fifth,  , has

its basis in physics, and this is the one chord of three notes which has been recognized by musicians as a perfectly satisfactory concord, the only one on which the ear will rest with satisfaction as the closing harmony of a composition. Moreover, the study of the phenomena of overtones furnishes us with additional explanation of the comparative harshness or smoothness of certain combinations of tones. In Ex. 13 the black notes represent the principal overtones resulting from the semibreves beneath them—

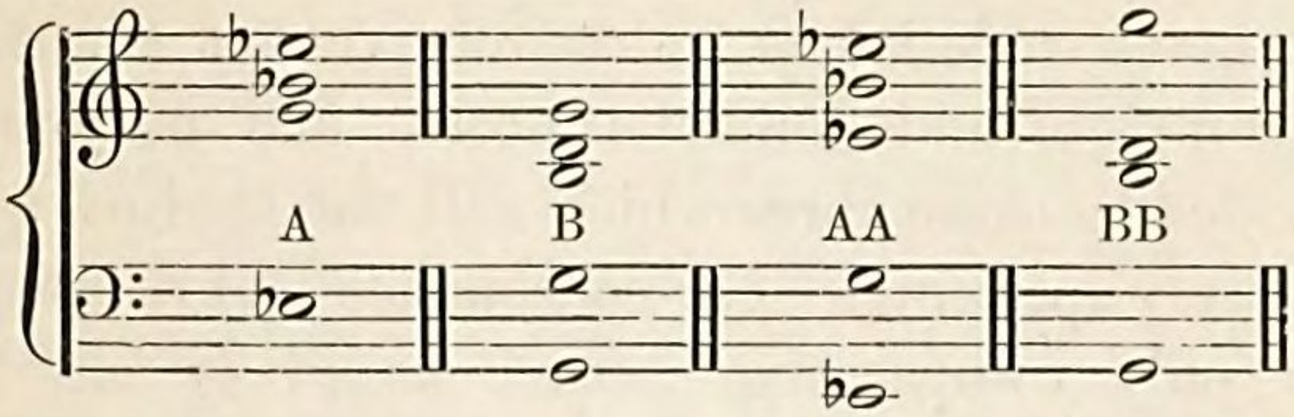
Ex. 13.

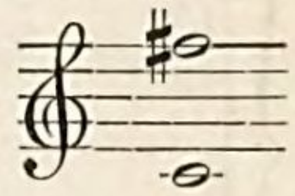


and on comparing the overtones we see that in sounding the keynote and fifth together we get overtones which are partially in accord, while in sounding the keynote and second together we get overtones which all clash with each other—the dissonance being, as it were, multiplied. We can also see a reason why the interval of the tenth (the third an octave higher) should be less harsh than the close third, because the G♯ overtone on the E, in sounding the tenth, is removed to a long distance from the G natural overtone on the C, while in the case of the close third the G♯ and G natural of the overtones directly clash. It was probably from this cause (though without knowing it) that the older musical theorists were opposed to the doubling of the third in a chord; if there were to be more notes than three in the chord, they would rather double the fifth or octave than the third; and in organ music, where the pedal allows of a more extended harmony than on the piano, the final chord of a piece, which may be written for the piano as at A and B,

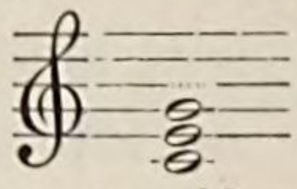
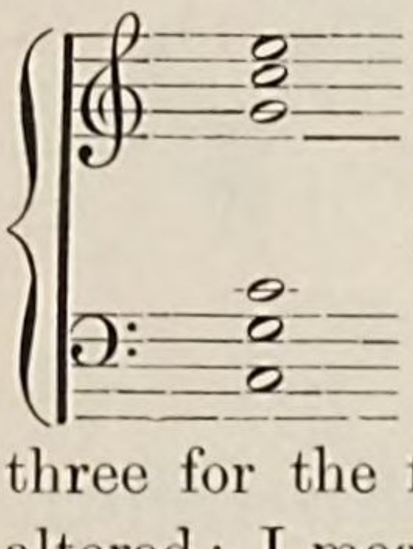
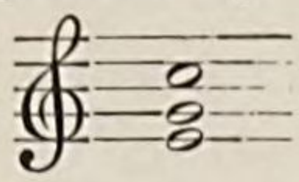
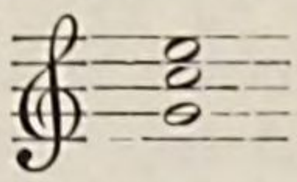
Ex. 14, was generally written by Bach and the other ancient writers for the organ as at AA and BB, the third being left

Ex. 14.



in the middle, with a large space on either side between it and the keynote above and below, so as to give as pure and harmonious an effect as possible to the closing chord. And this same condition applies to all dissonances: they are less harsh if the tones composing them are heard in different octaves than if they were heard in the same octave:  is less harsh than  , for example.

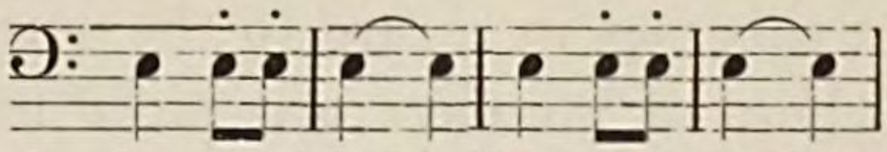
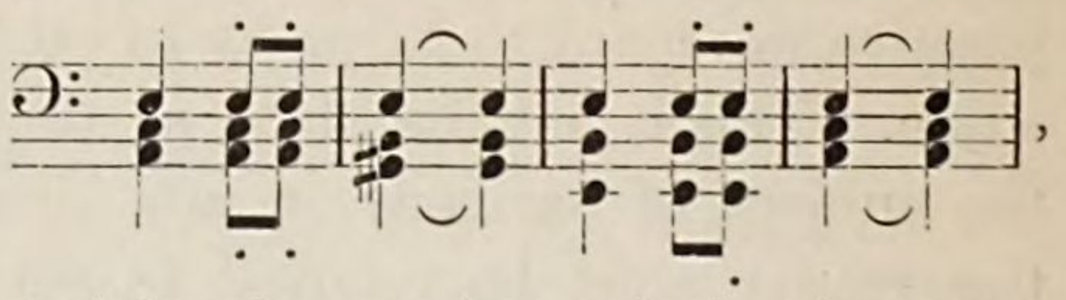
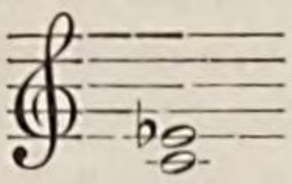
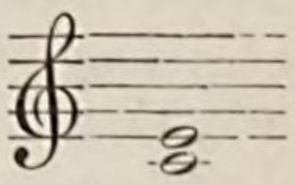
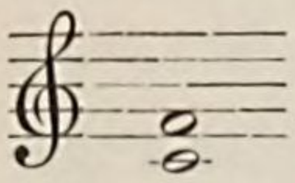
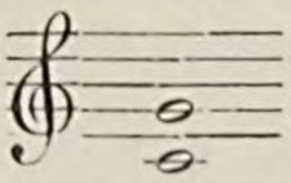
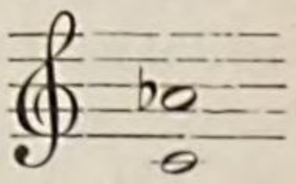
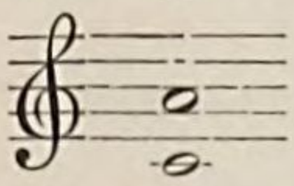
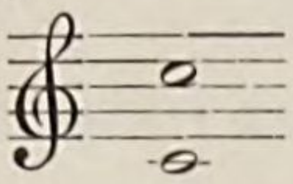
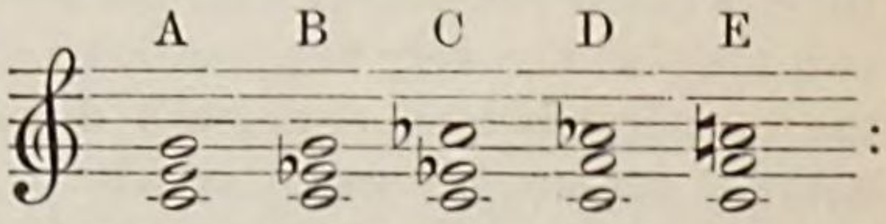
It has been said (page 13, *ante*) that while the design and arrangement of successive sections of a musical composition are dictated by purely æsthetic considerations, the simultaneous combination of sounds in harmony is partially governed by physical law. The operation of physical law upon the treatment of harmony in detail can only be said, however, to go so far as this—that the combinations which are recognized as concords, as being more consonant and therefore more physically agreeable to the ear than the rest, are so for a demonstrable physical reason, viz. that their vibrations (as before shown) are in a simpler numerical ratio. But to recognize that some intervals are for physical reasons consonant, and others dissonant, does not involve the conclusion that we must use the consonant in preference to the dissonant, unless in special cases. It would be out of place here to attempt to go into the subject of harmony, as treated

by musicians, in detail; it is a very large and complicated one, and we are here only dealing with general principles. What is necessary for the reader to understand, for our present subject, is this: no combination of less than three different notes (repetitions in the octave not counting) can make a complete and defined concord; and no fourth note can be added to those three which will not produce a discord, comparatively speaking. For consonance and dissonance are after all only comparative terms, *except in one position*, already referred to, viz. the final chord with which the piece concludes. That *must* be the triad, or "common chord," formed by the keynote, third, and fifth,  ; with the notes doubled and repeated in other octaves, if you like, as  ; but no other tone can be added to those three for the final chord, nor can the position of the bass be altered; I mean that the ear will not find the point of repose which it imperatively demands at the close of the music. The chords  and  (called in musical parlance the first and second "inversions" of the common chord) are composed of the same tones and are consonant to the same extent, but they do not satisfy the ear as closing chords; the keynote must be the bass. Now if we refer to the fact, as shown in Ex. 12 (see page 25), that the third and fifth are naturally generated from the keynote in over-tones or "harmonics," and that they are the principal and nearest harmonics, this refusal of the ear to rest finally upon any combination but this one, or to be satisfied with any other note for the bass except the physical generating note of the other two, is very significant, and gives us at least one

point at which æsthetic treatment of harmony is absolutely controlled by physical law.[1]

The significance of this fact in regard to the demand of the ear for the common chord at the close of a piece is the more apparent when we consider the fluctuations of opinion and practice in regard to harmony in other portions of a composition. This is not the place, as already observed, to go into the subject of harmony in any detailed manner; for that, the reader must be referred to one of the many technical treatises on the subject. But the general bearing of the subject may be touched on here. As has been observed already, harmony is as the structural portion of music, to which melody is the outline. Not only is a mere melody, however beautiful, bald and thin in effect unsupported by harmony, but it often loses much of its expression when heard apart from a harmonized accompaniment, as the relative position and meaning of a tone in the melody is often defined and brought out by the accompanying harmony, on which, so to speak, it floats, and by which its true level is measured. Sometimes, indeed, the effect of melody is really produced on the mind by the combination of the melody

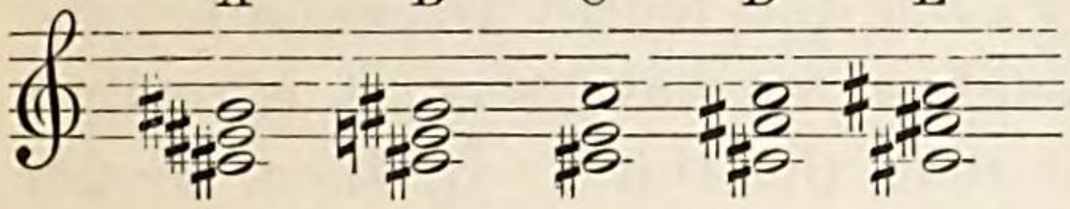
[1] This physical necessity for the common chord with the major third as the closing harmony of the composition, was so strongly felt in the earlier days of music, that up to about the middle of the eighteenth century it was the general custom to end a composition written in a minor key with the major chord; thus at the end of a movement in C minor, where the "signature" of the key is three flats we find the closing chord written with a natural to the E to give the major third. The effect of this sudden burst of the bright and harmonious combination of the major third (a better consonance than the minor third, in which the vibrations are as 5 to 6) is often very fine, and is no doubt more satisfactory, physically, to the ear; it has been abandoned in modern music in the minor keys, for æsthetic reasons, because it is felt as contradicting the predominant sentiment of a composition in the minor key: the ear accepts the minor chord as a close imitation, physically, of the true common chord, and as more in keeping, in point of expression, with what has preceded it.

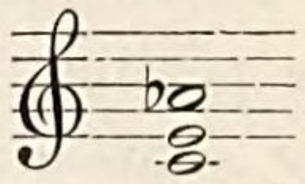
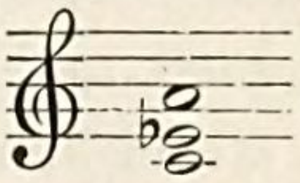
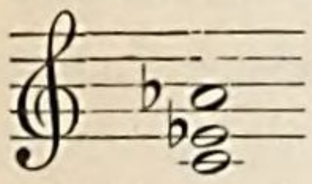
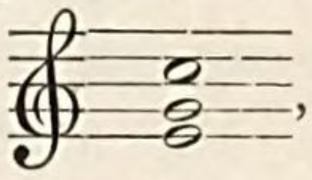
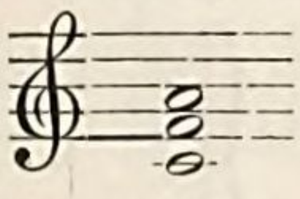
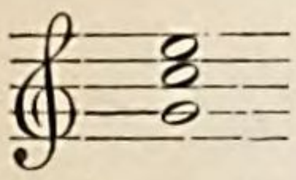
and harmony, and by that alone: for instance, in Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, the opening bars of the subject of the *allegretto*,  , can hardly be said to be melody, but only rhythm; but when we hear it with the accompanying harmony,  , a melodic idea is suggested by the varying relation between the upper note and the harmonies: many more elaborated instances of this might be cited. There is also a higher and more recondite form of music, to be noted just now, in which the harmony is formed, not by chords, or combinations of notes, built up to sustain the melody, but by the simultaneous progression and interweaving of several melodies, all of equal importance in the design, and which form a harmony among themselves. But in all these æsthetic uses of harmony there intrudes the question, Which notes can be combined in harmony with good effect, and which must be forbidden? Now, the mere question of which are the consonant intervals is easily settled. The intervals which, though in a varying degree, are all fairly consonant and agreeable to the ear, are the minor third  , major third  , fourth  , fifth  , minor sixth  , sixth  , and octave  . Adding another part to the harmony, these can be grouped into the following consonant chords of three notes:  :

A consisting of major third and fifth; B of minor third and fifth; C, minor third and minor sixth; D, fourth and minor

sixth; E, fourth and major sixth. For comparison these are all written here in reference to the same bass note, C, but the chords can be repeated on the twelve other degrees of the chromatic scale; *e.g.*, basing them a semitone higher,

A B C D E



. We cannot use the chord with the major third and minor sixth,  , as a concord, because though each of the upper notes by itself is in consonance with the bass, they form between them an imperfect or diminished fourth, which is a dissonance; and in like manner we cannot use the chord  , minor third and major sixth, because the third and sixth then form an interval of an augmented fourth, which is also a dissonance. It should be observed also that the chord lettered "C" in the above list is really only another position of "A,"  being only the same harmony as  , minor third and minor sixth; and "E" is only another position again of "A,"  being the same harmony as  , viz. fourth and major sixth.

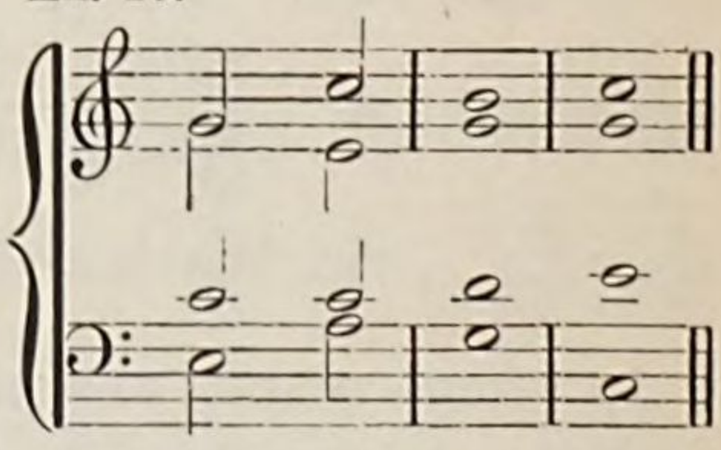
In recent years a new theory of the generation and classification of harmonies has been started, according to which combinations of more than three notes are regarded as harmonious, and a different aspect is given to the subject; but this may be passed over here, as still a matter in controversy, and in some sense involving only a difference of nomenclature; for the proportions in the vibrating value of tones, which are the physical basis of consonance and dissonance, are, of course, unaltered by any theory. It is sufficient for our purpose here to observe that during the whole period of the history of music as an art, down to the present genera-

tion, all the works of the greatest composers have been constructed on the understanding that only those chords tabulated above could be regarded as consonant chords; and in the time of the old Church composers of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century even the fourth was regarded and treated as a discord, though, as we have seen, it is really a more consonant interval than the third. If, then, so few of the possible combinations of tones form consonant harmonies, how do we account for the immense variety of combinations, other than these, in the works of the masters of music? The answer is, that the finest music consists much more largely of discords than of concords, but of discords framed and introduced according to a certain logical method, which may be called reasoning in tones. We may distinguish two classes of these, viz. discords which are only temporarily formed by passing sounds, the harmonic relations of which may be practically neglected; and discords which form an integral part of the harmonic structure. Thus, in the passage, Ex. 15, the C marked † is a true discord forming an integral feature in the harmony; while the notes marked * are only passing notes of melodial expression, the harmonic relation of which is ignored, as they are only heard for a moment in passing. The essential harmony of that phrase, deprived of both classes of discords, is as shown in Ex. 16. In regard to the class of passing or melodic discords, they are in modern music simply endless, and may be of the most highly elaborated form: Ex. 17, for instance, is the same harmonic progression as 15 and 16, the rapid

Ex. 15.



Ex. 16.

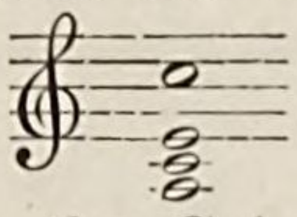
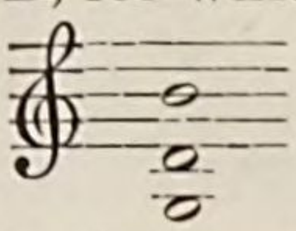


chromatic passage being a mere ornamental ripple on the surface of the harmonic combination:

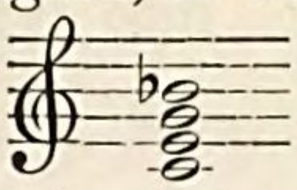
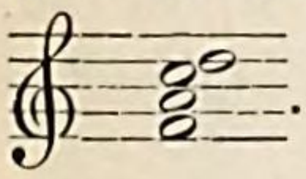
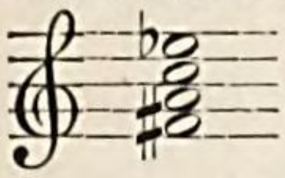
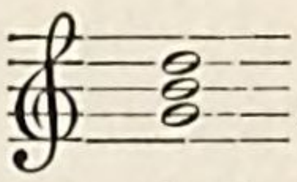
Ex. 17.



In this class of passing discords it will readily be seen that time, or rather *speed*, is an element; that combinations which pass off perfectly well in a passage played rapidly might become palpable and offensive discords in the same passage played very slowly. But this is not the case with the other and far more important class of discords represented by the C marked †, in Ex. 15. If that bar is compared with the corresponding bar in 16, it will be seen that the real upper note of that chord is B, but that in 15 the C is held over from the previous bar, and only drops into the B in the middle of the bar. That fact represents one of the most important and vivifying elements in musical composition. When the early composers of music in several parts were feeling their way, they were exceedingly afraid of stepping out of the paths of pure harmony; but they could not go far without feeling how monotonous was a composition entirely made up of consonances, and how cramped was the movement of the music within these fetters. And by degrees there crept in the perception that the harsh effect of a

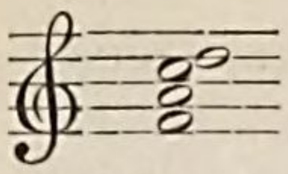
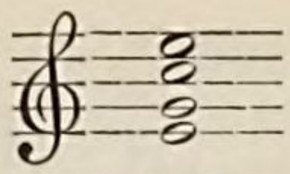
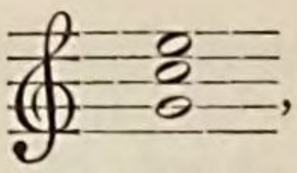
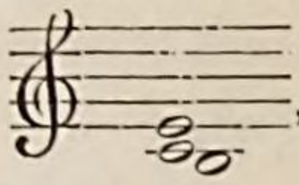
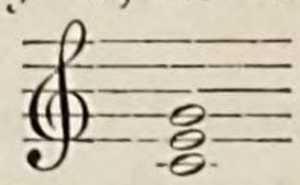
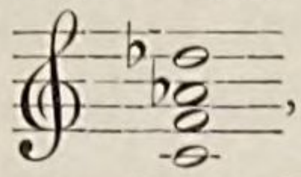
discord to the ear was softened if the discordant note had been heard as a concordant one in a preceding harmony, and prolonged from that, instead of being first sounded along with the notes to which it formed a discord; only with the proviso that, having been heard as a discord, it must then be allowed to drop or "resolve" into the concordant note of the new harmony. Refer once more to Ex. 15; it will be seen that the C in the first bar is part of the consonant chord  ; while the other parts move into a new position, the C is prolonged ("suspended") into the next bar, forming a discord for half the bar, and is then relinquished in favour of the B, for which the ear was waiting, as part of the harmony  ; the latter process being called the "resolution" of the discord. This is the simplest form of a system which has run through and moulded nearly the whole of musical composition. It can be applied to whole handfuls of notes as well as to one; it can be applied, as Bach frequently applies it, to entire passages, the harmonic structure of which appears abnormal until it is perceived that the whole phrase, perhaps of several bars in length, is one great "suspension," the explanation of which is to be found in its relation to the passages which precede and follow it.

Although this practice of the suspension and resolution of discords was probably first begun from a mere desire to avoid what seemed to the early composers the physical harshness of a discord, it has long ceased to be regarded as a physical requirement, and become rather a part of the æsthetic of music, a form of intellectual expression. The practice of preparing the discord in the previous bar, and holding over or suspending the notes forming it (not sounding them afresh), is long ago given up as a *necessity;* it is only adopted as a source of very fine effect and expression.

In comparatively early days of music, again, it was recognized that the chord of the seventh,  , though unquestionably a discord in an arithmetical sense, was so far agreeable and expressive to the ear that it might be plumped down upon without any "preparation"; and in the modern period (what we may call the post-Beethoven period) no composer would hesitate to commence a composition straight off with such a discord as  , if it suited the expression he wanted to convey; Beethoven, for instance, commences one of his sonatas with that harmony,[1] and another with  . Hence it has been argued by some musicians of very "advanced" views (and not without a certain plausibility), that there is no finality whatever in regard to musical composition; that each generation of composers has held itself bound by rules which a succeeding generation has broken through, and that in fact you may write as you please, irrespective of any law either logical or physical. The answer to this, which I believe to be a perfectly false position, would be in the first place that even those discords which have been used by modern composers without preparation of any kind, are discords having a distinct logical relation with the key of the composition, or of the passage which follows them: to take the two examples quoted just now,  naturally resolves itself, according to the usually received musical theory, into  , which is the dominant harmony of the key of C or of C minor,[2] and

[1] The word "harmony" throughout this chapter is used for any combination of tones (consonant or dissonant), as opposed to "melody," which deals only with single tones.

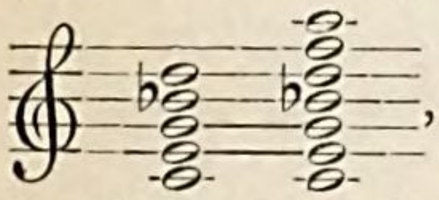
[2] For the sake of simplicity, all the discords quoted in this paragraph are reduced to terms (so to speak) of the key of C, so that the reader can the more easily compare them.

 into  or  , which are two positions of the normal chord of the tonic: and the discords themselves are such as are fairly endurable to the ear. No composer, as far as I know, has ventured to commence a composition with such a combination as  , which would be not only intolerably harsh to the ear, but has no logical relation to the tonic key.[1] But the further and more complete answer lies in the fact that though a composer, according to modern practice, has a choice of various concords or discords for the commencement of his composition, *he has no choice for the conclusion of it*, he is still obliged to keep before him that major triad  as the *ultima ratio* of his musical progression. Of the despotic nature of this law there is a striking example at the close of *Lohengrin*, the work of a composer who has professedly and ostentatiously kicked over all the teaching of his predecessors as to the handling of tonal relations. The opera ends with a choral utterance of the spectators lamenting the departure of Lohengrin, and the last harmony heard from the voices on the stage is  , a kind of wail on a plaintive-sounding discord, after which the voices are silent; and, in the way of making the sound an echo to the sense, this is so far logical, for the personages on the stage are left in unalleviated anguish. But the physical law of tone is inexorable, and though the composer may drop the curtain on that chord from the singers, he is obliged to use his orchestra to wheel round and deploy into the full chord of the key, before he

[1] Beethoven's "crash" of the whole of the notes of the diatonic scale, in the *finale* of the Ninth Symphony, is hardly a case in point, as it is done with the deliberate intention of producing a harsh effect, to illustrate an idea. As to the æsthetic justification of this, see the chapter on Beethoven in this volume.

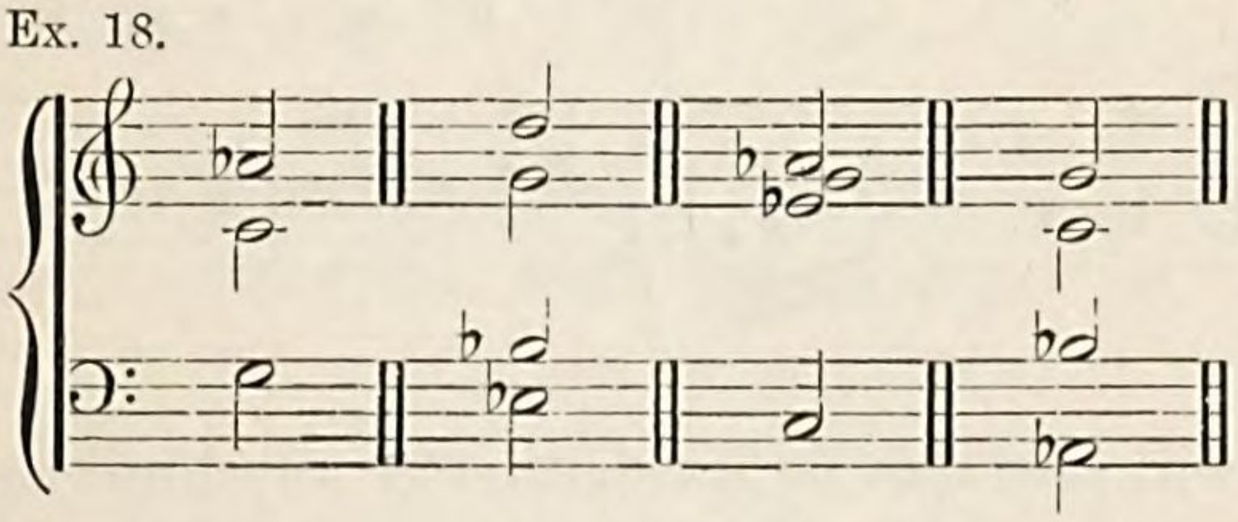
can dismiss his audience, who would otherwise go home with their ears tingling.

This is a typical example of the fact, before mentioned, that the ear will tolerate no harmony but that of the full chord of the triad as a final resting place; and the reader will understand now why this fact was so emphasised a few pages before. For, broadly speaking, this is the key to all the philosophy of discords in musical composition. The older theorist may give elaborate rules for preparing, suspending and resolving discords, and for artistically "retarding" their resolution: the modern theorist may assure you that the chords of the 9th and 13th,



, are logically derived from the note which is the "root" of the chord, but he can no more find final repose on his ninth than can the older theorist on his suspended discord. Apart from all the technical jargon of the theorist, the central fact may be expressed thus: *all discord is a passage towards the ultimate point of rest*, and it is defensible or not, in the æsthetic sense, according as its relation to that point of rest, or to the steps which precede and follow it in the course toward the point of rest, are clearly defined and logical. And this relation is apprehended and judged, in reality, rather by the intellect than by the physical impression on the ear alone. Let any reader strike, on a piano or organ, the chords given in example 18, and he will

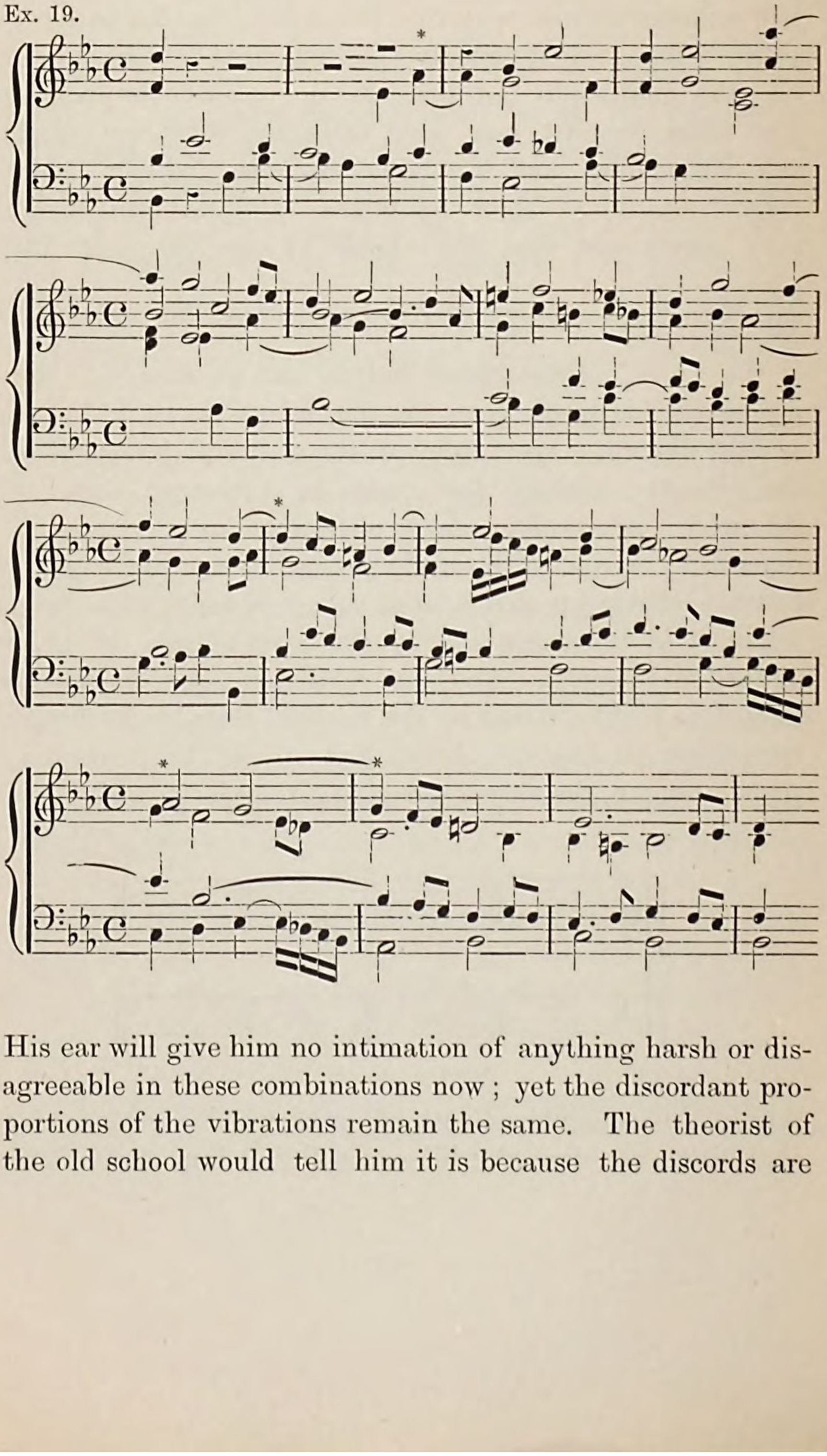
Ex. 18.



require no acquaintance with any theory of harmony to know that those are discords; his ear will tell him that at once.

Now let him play over on the organ (the pianoforte is hardly a full test, because the sounds are not sufficiently sustained), the following passage from Bach—example 19, in which, at the points marked *, all these discords successively occur :—

Ex. 19.



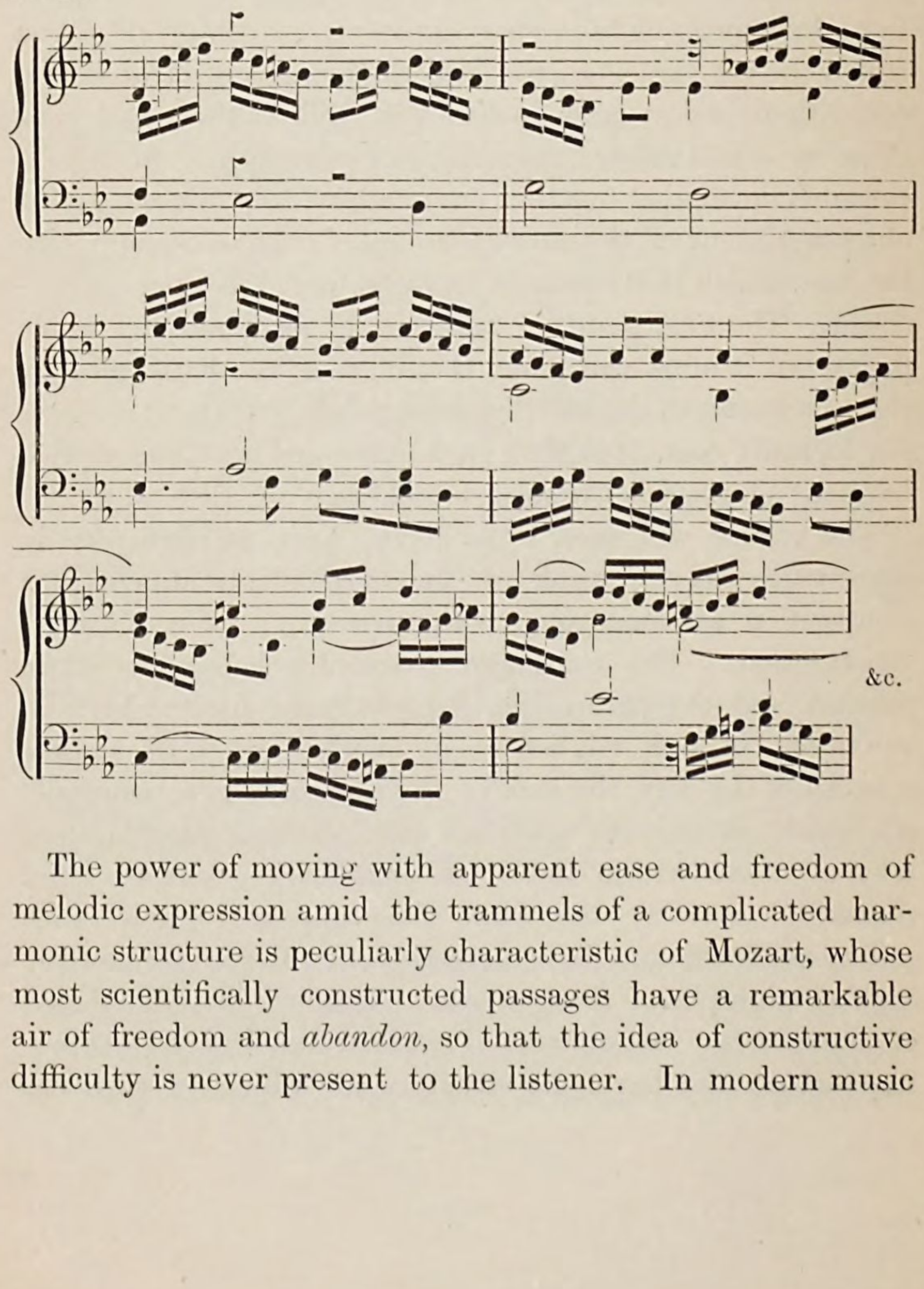
His ear will give him no intimation of anything harsh or disagreeable in these combinations now ; yet the discordant proportions of the vibrations remain the same. The theorist of the old school would tell him it is because the discords are

all properly prepared and resolved: that is one way of putting it. A broader and more comprehensive view, which I have never yet seen suggested, is that the hearing intelligence (if I may so put it) unconsciously reasons, and recognizes that each of these discords has a logical relation with what precedes and follows it, as a link in the chain of progression which reaches its temporary resting place in the last chord of the quotation. Sounded separately, as in example 18, these discords had no meaning and no justification, and were offensive to the ear; heard in their right place in the composition, their meaning is at once apparent, as combinations on which the ear cannot repose, but which arise out of what preceded them and suggest in turn what follows them, as logical steps in a continuous progress; being composed in fact of concords dovetailed together on an alternating system, so that one constituent of the chord is retarded from advancing with the rest, which in its turn is again retarded behind its successor. The final point of rest may be postponed for whole pages, but it must come, and the intermediate harmonies are right or wrong to the intelligence according as they are or are not logically connected with each other, and with the normal harmony of the triad towards which they are all tending.

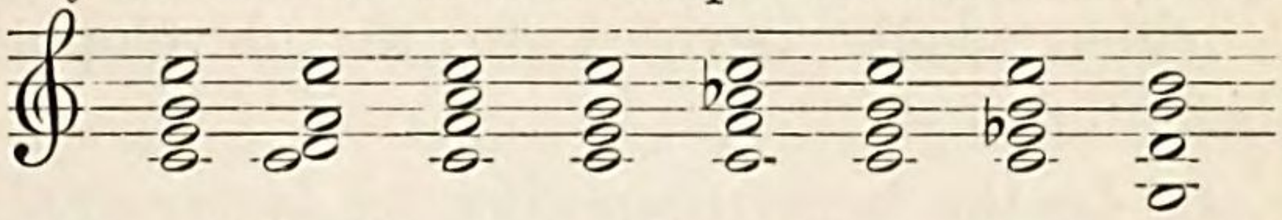
The reader will now, it is hoped, have no difficulty in perceiving why we speak of the harmonic treatment of a composition as analogous with structure; as a form of construction. The consonant harmonies being limited in number, and the permissible discords being limited by considerations of their relation to one another and to the normal concord of the key, the task of the composer is to construct his music so that his melodies and harmonic combinations may all move within the lines thus marked out by strict reasoning, and at the same time appear to move with unfettered freedom. To achieve this completely is one of the highest triumphs of the composer. It must be remembered of course that a vast amount of intricate detail may be superimposed on the harmonic structure, all which in turn has

to be designed so as to be in proper relation and subordination to the leading lines of that structure. A comparatively simple example of this may be found in the same prelude of Bach's from which Ex. 19 is quoted. After displaying the unadorned design of his harmonic structure in the passage there quoted, the composer proceeds with the same structural design, decorating it by a new feature in quicker movement, built upon the main lines of structure :—

Ex. 20.



The power of moving with apparent ease and freedom of melodic expression amid the trammels of a complicated harmonic structure is peculiarly characteristic of Mozart, whose most scientifically constructed passages have a remarkable air of freedom and *abandon*, so that the idea of constructive difficulty is never present to the listener. In modern music

this intricate interweaving of harmonic construction is mostly less developed, modern instrumental music especially having expanded rather in the direction of melodic expression and richness of tone-colouring or *timbre* (an element in music we have not yet touched upon); and we often find long passages constructed merely on the basis of a simple succession of harmonies such as  ;

one harmony perhaps being kept up through many bars, the sense of movement being imparted by the repetition of melodic phrases built on these harmonies, and the want of variety in tonal position being compensated for by variety of *timbre*, through the alternate employment of various classes of instruments. This form of composition has less of intellectual interest, and makes less demand on the intellectual grasp of the composer, than that which is based on a continual change in the harmonic basis; but it may have equal interest of another kind, arising out of emotional expression in melody, and richness of tone-colouring in the instrumentation. What is important to remember here, however, is that in either case the formation and sequence of harmonies is subject to conditions arising out of their logical relation to one another and to the point to which they are progressing. No music, worth calling music, is to be had except in subordination to this process of rational and logical harmonic progression.

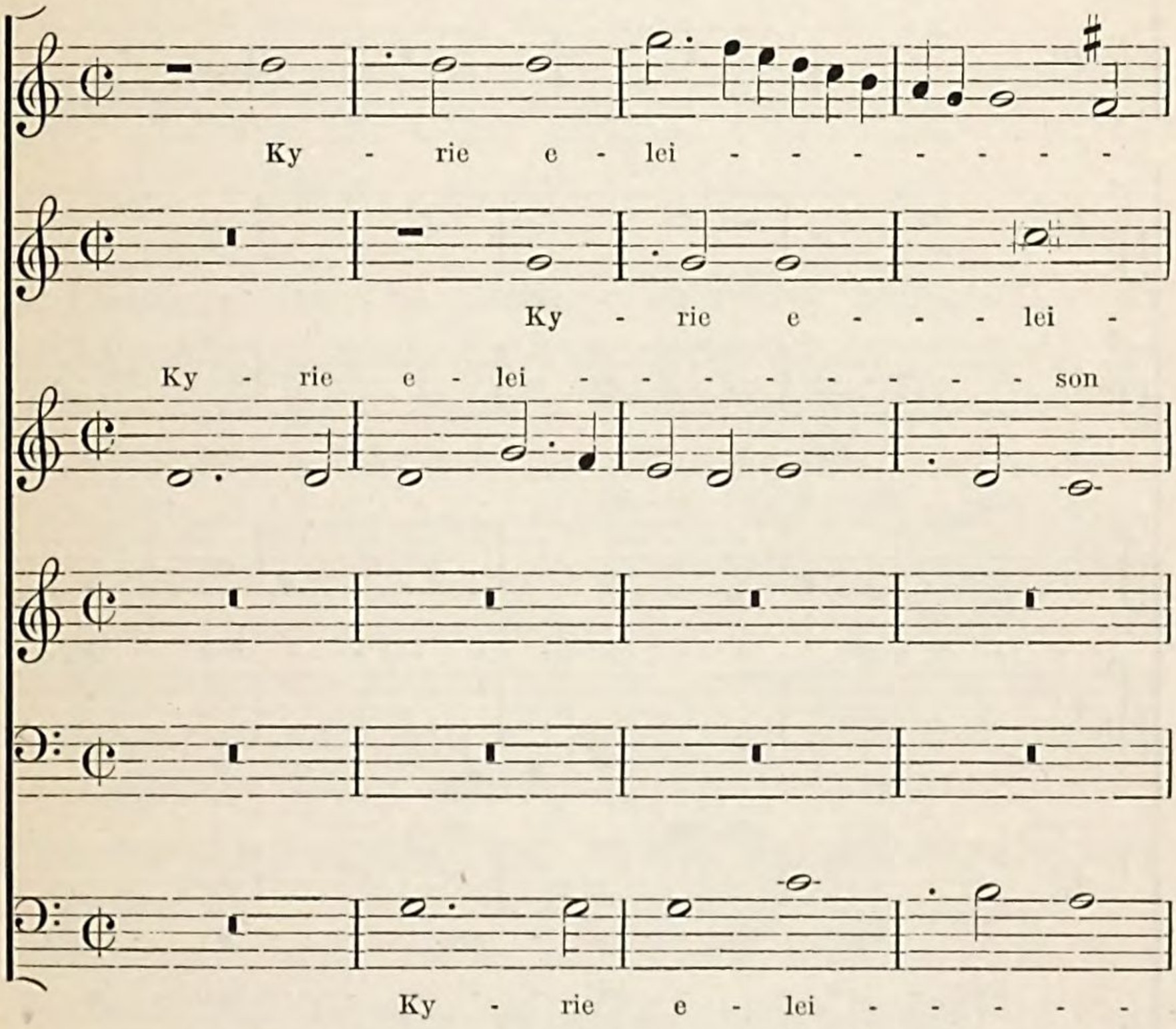
Having now arrived at a general view as to the structural conditions of harmonised music, and the extent to which they are influenced by physical law, we may return to the consideration of that development of a musical composition in extension and proportion in time, which, as already observed, is a matter of pure æsthetic. We may confine our attention entirely to instrumental music, in which the con-

sideration of form is based only on abstract ideas, uninfluenced by the interference of any special concrete ideas suggested by words. The same general principle of form applies to vocal music also, but it has been much more highly developed in instrumental music, partly because of this very freedom from interruption, partly because the attention is thus wholly devoted to the development of abstract ideal form.

By far the larger proportion of instrumental music of the higher class may be regarded as derived, as Wagner has put it (truly enough, as a matter of history), from "dance-forms"; from a simple form of music in which rhythm was a predominant feature. But before we enter on the consideration of this, we may notice that there is another perfectly distinct form of instrumental music, of very grand type but of more restricted expression, which appears to be directly derived from the early forms of non-rhythmical vocal music, viz., that which is now known as the *fugue* form, and which is still common to both vocal and instrumental music. The genesis of this seems to have come about in this manner: the first tentative efforts in harmony arose in the endeavour to arrange several voice parts so that they could be sung together without the production of discord, and this ingenious device, as it was no doubt then regarded, was distinguished as *contra punctum*, "point against point," from the pricks or dots used to indicate the notes: hence the (to many) mysterious word "counterpoint," which originally signified merely that one note was set in opposition or in relation to another to be sung simultaneously with it. By degrees this system of arranging parts for several voices so that they could be sung together without producing discords arrived at more complex development, and in the hands of a great genius, Palestrina, in the middle of the sixteenth century, it became a full and rich interweaving of melodies for several voices; Palestrina representing the highest development of this ancient school of vocal music in Italy (where it arose), as Orlando

Gibbons represents its highest development fifty years later in England; music, like Renaissance art, following Italy in this country at a respectful distance of half a century. Now this church music of the Italian school had no marked rhythm in it: rhythm is connected with the dance in the early efforts of music, and the service of the church offered no hint of that kind. Nor is there in the music of Palestrina and his school any marked or predominant melodic form. It is simply a weft of harmony formed by the intertwining of different vocal parts. The following short quotation from the commencement of Palestrina's *Missa Papæ Marcelli* will give an idea of the nature of this school of music.[1]

Ex. 21.



[1] The parts are here written out in the modern, popularly-used treble and bass clefs, to render it more intelligible for general readers.

son e - lei - - - - - - - - - - - -

son Ky - rie e - - - lei - - - - -

Ky - rie e - lei - - - - - - - - - - - -

Ky - rie e - lei - - - - - - son Ky -

Ky - rie e - lei - - - - - - - son

- - son.

son Ky - rie e - lei son

son Ky - ri - e e - lei - son Ky -

son Ky - ri - e e - lei - - - - - - - - -

- - ri - e e - lei - - - - - son Ky - ri

Ky - rie e - lei - son. Ky - rie

Ky - rie e - lei - - - - - son.

Ky -



Although this composition is divided by bar-lines into equal lengths in time, the reader will perceive that the run of the music and the accent of the phrases are quite independent of the bar divisions, which are used as a necessity for writing out the music intelligibly in score, but were not used in writing out the single voice parts, and there is no beat or rhythm in the music corresponding directly with them. Nor is there any predominating theme or "subject" in the composition ; it starts with a marked phrase which is taken up and repeated by one voice after another, but as the movement proceeds this is dropped and another phrase taken up, to be repeated in the same way by one voice after another. The first phrase never recurs, nor is any allusion made to it. Thus it will be seen that this is a composition with no organized form ; there is a marvellous solemnity about the effect of the vocal harmony.in this severe and sustained style,

but there is no comprehensive design giving organic form to the whole; it is a kind of music in which you almost feel that you may begin anywhere and leave off anywhere; the details vary more or less but the expression is always the same, as in the religious paintings of "Pictor Ignotus"—

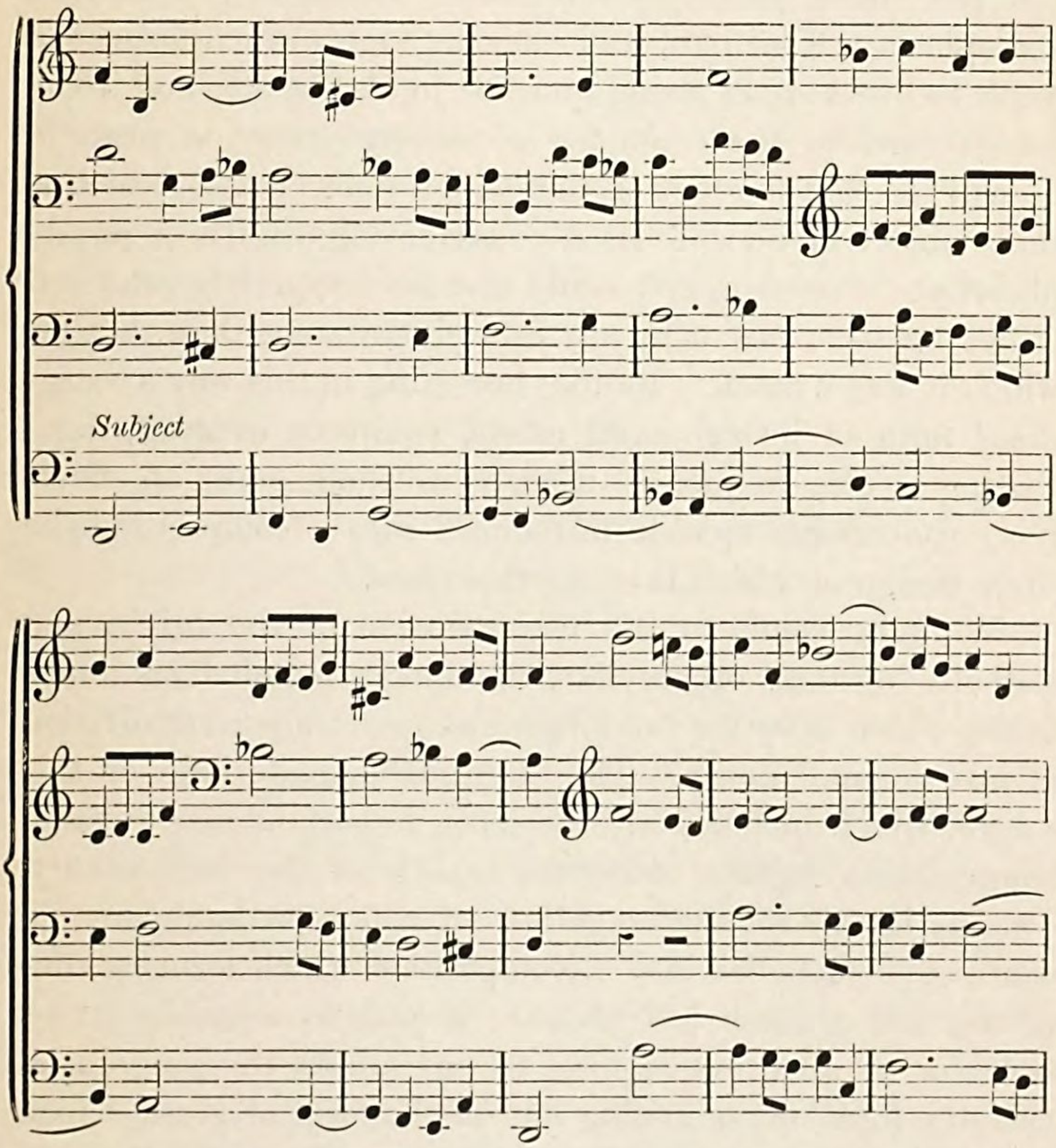
"With the same cold calm beautiful regard."

Gradually there stole on this passionless style the sense of rhythm, of that systole and diastole of sound which gives such a human heart-pulse to music; and gradually also there awakened in music, as it had previously awakened in painting, that desire for the creation of organized form which is at the root of all art. And form and unity were imparted to choral music by the development of the *fugue*, in which one predominating melody or "subject" rules the whole composition, with subordinate melodies grouped in accompaniment (in "counterpoint") to it; and in which gradually the practice of the masters of composition recognizes the most effective manner of treating and working up the composition to a climax, and formulates unwritten laws to that end, which become in time written laws, having an æsthetic basis only, and the *rationale* of which simply amounts to a reduction to rule of what the master minds had found by experience to produce the most telling effect.

This form of composition, the essential condition of which is the singing of a fixed number of parts by the same number of separate voices, became adopted as a form of instrumental composition. It was recognized that, apart from giving expression to any special words, this form of writing in a fixed number of parts or "voices," with a predominant subject which was heard now in one part, now in another, was in itself of high intellectual and artistic interest as a form of abstract musical expression; and moreover, that with instruments it could be carried out with a degree of elaboration and brilliancy of detail which was not possible with the voice. Some of the very finest instrumental fugues, however,

retain much of the severity of vocal style ; if we take a quotation from Bach's organ fugue in the Doric mode (so-called), for instance, and write out the parts in score, one to each line, we see at once that it has all the main characteristics of a choral fugue, a harmony produced by four voices, each pursuing its own apparently independent course :

Ex. 22.



The difference between this and Palestrina's writing, however, is that we have here a distinct and regular rhythm, synonymous with the division into bars ; and if we compare the whole composition (too long to quote here), we find it

governed by one predominating musical idea, and working up at the close to a climax carefully prepared and led up to: in short, it is an artistic whole, composed in subordination to one general design. In other respects this fugue, as observed, has a tolerably close resemblance, except in one or two episodes, to choral writing; but there are plenty of examples, ancient and modern, in which the genius of fugue has put on a purely instrumental character; a famous example is the brilliant and exciting fugue which forms the *finale* to Beethoven's string quartett in C, Op. 59; and if the reader turn to the examples of melody given on page 9, he will see that the first of those quotations (Ex. 4), which is the subject of one of Bach's clavier fugues, has a purely pianoforte character, and could not be adequately rendered either by the voice or by any other instrument than that for which it was written. Besides becoming in this way a recognized form of instrumental music, complete in itself, fugal writing is also frequently used, as we shall see, as an effectively contrasting episode introduced into a composition the main design of which is of another class.

We now come to the consideration of the origin and æsthetic of that other class, the music founded on dance forms, which is by far the larger and more important division of instrumental music. The essential characteristic of this school, which includes all the most important instrumental compositions written since the middle of the last century, consists in the welding together of a few predominant and contrasted melodies into a composition which forms a connected and symmetrical whole. We can to a certain extent trace, or at all events figure to our minds, the progress of this development as arising out of the form of music which in the time of Bach and Handel was popular under the title of *Suites de pièces*. The compositions under this name were strings of comparatively short pieces, sometimes commencing with a "Præludium" or "Ouverture," but the bulk of them bearing the names of the dances of the period—*Courante*,

Allemande, *Gavotte*, *Sarabande*, *Minuet*, *Bourrée*, *Gigue*, &c. These were in the measure of the dances from which their names were taken, but they were not meant to dance to; they were instrumental compositions in which the simple form of the original dance-tune was expanded into a somewhat more elaborate movement in the same measure, intended purely as a piece of instrumental music to be listened to. The minuet and sarabande perhaps alone retained their simple dance-form; we know, on Goldsmith's evidence, that minuets written as part of an instrumental composition were occasionally made use of practically as dance-music,[1] but most of the pieces in the *Suites* were more elaborated, and in some of Bach's *Suites* the *gigue* ("Jig") which forms the *finale*, is a brilliant piece of *bravura*, which even at this day requires a pianist of the first force to do full justice to it.

All the dance pieces comprised in a *Suite* were written in the same key; and as composers in those days did not venture, or did not think it correct, to modulate far from the principal key, the effect in a long *Suite* is to give a feeling of monotony (in the literal as well as figurative sense of the word), and cause the ear rather to long for a change of tonality. It must be observed also that each piece forming the *Suite* is usually entirely continuous in its design and rhythm; there is no such thing as contrast of character or expression in different portions of the Allemande or Courante or Gavotte; they each carry on the same movement with the same predominating character throughout. The only relief from this monotony consists in the division of each little movement into two parts marked to the eye by the usual double-bar, and to the ear by the fact that the first part comes to a close in another key from that in

[1] *She Stoops to Conquer*: "My bear only dances to the genteelest of tunes, such as 'Water parted from the Sea,' or the minuet in *Ariadne;*" this beautiful minuet being part of the overture to Handel's opera under that title.

which it started, but always the most nearly related key, that of the fifth of the scale (called the "dominant" in musical parlance). Thus a gavotte in D will end the first part in A, and commence the second part in the same key; quickly coming round to and ending in the original key of D.

The essential distinction between this and the more modern form of instrumental music is, that instead of a number of "dance-tunes" being played one after the other, with no necessary connection between them except the fact that they are all in the same key and are all collected together as forming part of one set or *suite*, melodies in different keys and of contrasted character are linked together in one composition so that they appear as parts of an interdependent whole, and cannot be separated or torn out from their position in it. In other words, this is a progress to the creation of a more highly-organized form in art. This more highly-organized form of instrumental music was arrived at by a process of evolution almost as gradual and informal as the evolution processes of nature. It is almost impossible to mark out the stages of the progress, or to say exactly at what moment the change took place; we find hints of it in the work of various composers from time to time, but there was no moment when any special composer can be said to have consciously formulated any model of instrumental composition. All we can see clearly is that in the works of Haydn, among the composers whose works have lived, we first find what is called the "Sonata Form" in all its main features adopted as the composer's habitual form of writing in important compositions. It does not appear that Haydn in any conscious manner arbitrarily chose this form as the best and most interesting in which to cast his ideas; only that, as a musician of genius, he by a kind of intuition seized on the best points in the varied and tentative practice of his day in instrumental music, and possessed that formative power which enabled him to shape these elements into a coherent

whole, which has since formed in all essentials the accepted model for the highest class of instrumental compositions.

The reader will be the better able to appreciate the precise nature of this system of combining various melodies into a consistent whole, which forms the life-blood of modern instrumental music, if, before considering it in its more elaborated form, he studies the simpler exposition of it in the following beautiful little composition of Mozart's (Example 23), a Minuet only, but one which exhibits all the main elements of design of an important composition, on a small scale and in a concentrated form :—

MINUET.

Ex. 23.

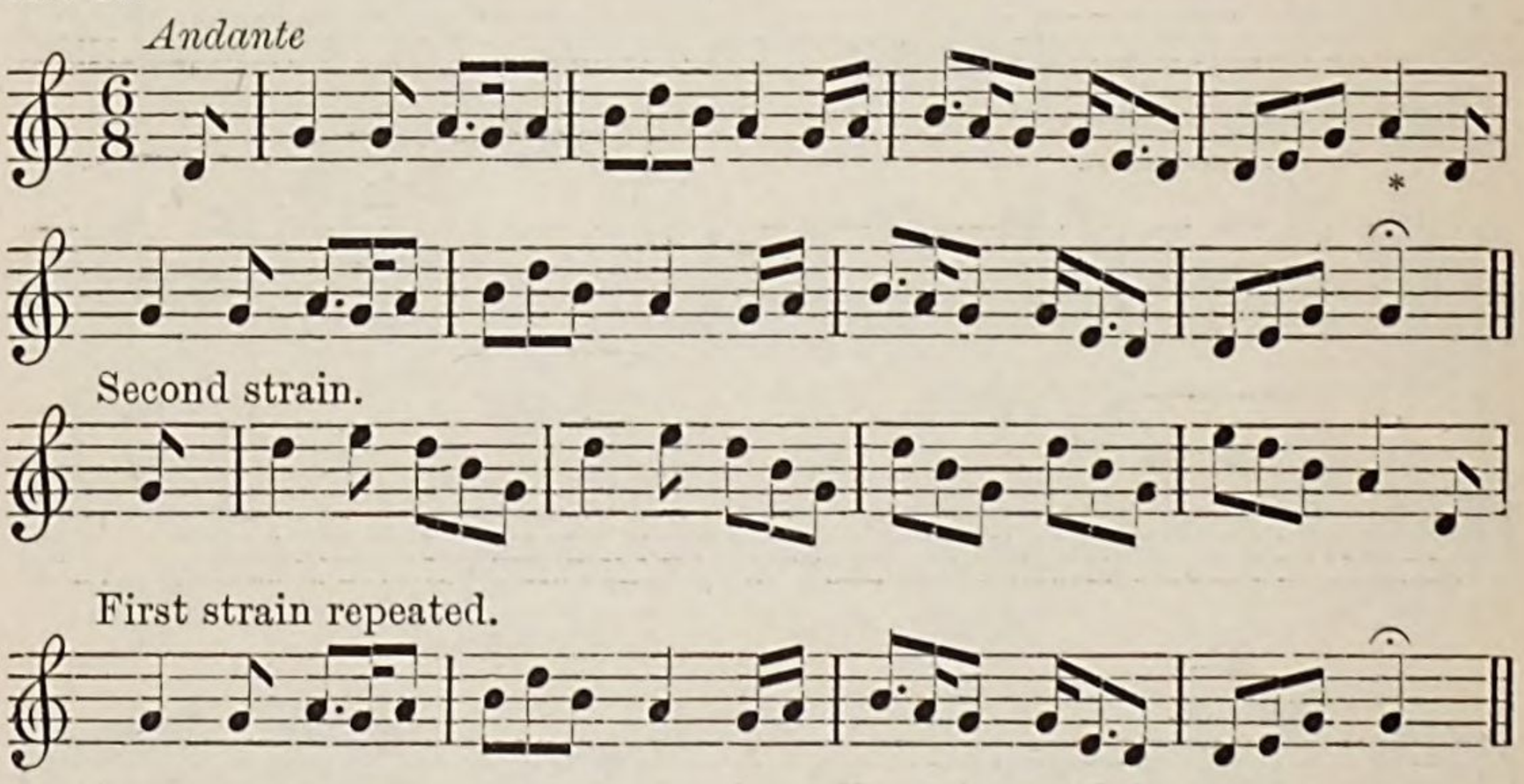



A
f


mancando
dolce
f
p
f
p
p
f
p
B
B

The reader will notice first that this little composition is divided into a first and second part, marked by the usual double bar lines. So, we observed, were the dance-tunes of the old *Suite* divided; so also will the earliest popular tunes and songs in most cases be found to divide themselves naturally into two halves, of which the second forms a kind of refrain or reply to the first strain, and which generally closes by the first strain repeated. Take as an example the old Scottish air which Burns has immortalized by the words he adapted to it:—

Ex. 24.

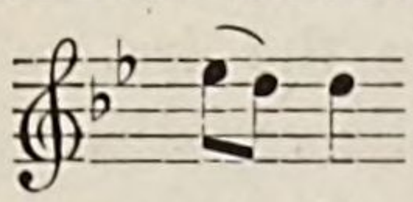


Here we commence with the principal strain, which ends in a half close at * and is then repeated identically, only ending with a full close at the double bar. After the double bar a new strain is introduced, a kind of contrast or answer to the first one, which latter is again repeated at the close of the whole strophe. This is, on a small scale, that "binary" form which seems to come naturally to mankind in the treatment of music, and is illustrated equally, though on a slightly different principle, in a great modern symphony for orchestra, with all its multifarious detail. The difference is that in the symphony the two principal melodies both come into the first part, and the opening of the second part is occupied

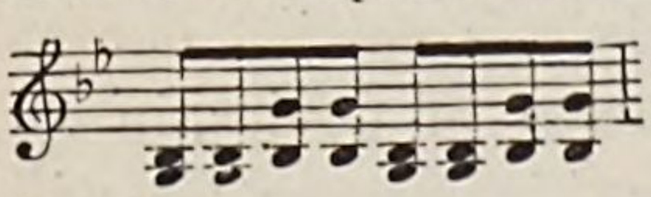
with new combinations of them in whole or in part. This is exemplified in a simpler form in Example 23. It commences in the first four bars with the principal subject, followed at * by a kind of extension or amplification of the same idea in the following bars, and coming to a close at A in the key of the dominant. Here the old-fashioned minuet of Bach's time would have closed its first part. But after A a lighter and brighter melody, of a totally different character, is introduced, forming a kind of ornamental fringe to the first part of the composition. After the double bar there commences a kind of inverted treatment of the development of the principal subject at * in the first part, accompanied by a rapid counterpoint in semiquavers in the bass: and this figure in the bass, be it observed, is suggested by the rapid passage ** in the second melody AA, and is an indirect reference to it, so that it is not introduced in a merely arbitrary manner. This rapid phrase gradually gets entirely its own way, and terminates in an octave scale passage for both hands leading to the bar marked *mancando*, which is the bridge by which we regain the first subject, which is presented, however, with a subtle variation in the harmony. The development is repeated as before, but in such a manner as to close this time in the principal key, D, and then the second melody, before introduced in the dominant key, is heard in the tonic key, and closes the composition. It should be observed that if this second melody, the "ornamental fringe" as I have called it, had been introduced *only* at AA, and nothing more heard of it, it would have been no part of the design, but only an excrescence; but being duly repeated again in the analogous position at BB, and one of its phrases being, moreover, referred to in the passage after the double bar, it becomes a portion of a design which forms a coherent whole.

Now let us see how the same principle is carried out, at more length and with greater elaboration of device, in an extended symphonic composition. For this purpose we will

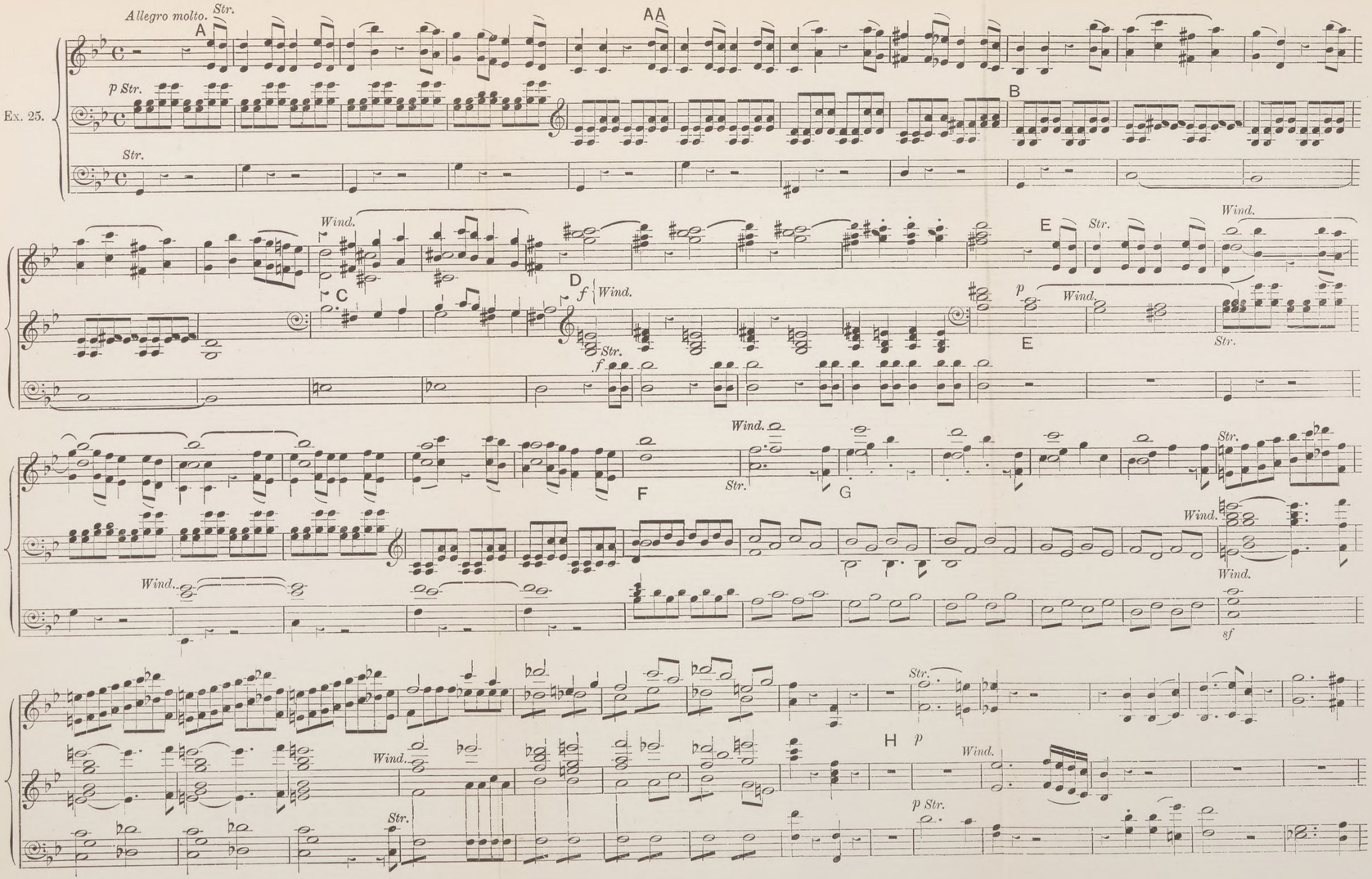
take one of the most perfectly balanced as well as one of the most beautiful instrumental compositions in existence, the first movement of Mozart's Symphony in G minor. For purposes of reference, and to make the subject as clear as possible, I have transcribed here the whole of the first part of this movement (Ex. 25) down to the conventional "double bar," compressing the different parts in the score into three staves, but so as to give all the actual notes employed,[1] and distinguishing the two principal classes of instruments into which the orchestra is divided, the stringed and the wind instruments, by the letters "St." and "W."; for although Mozart's method of using and constrasting the instruments is much more simple than that of more modern composers, and he employs fewer instruments, it will be seen that in one or two passages the contrast of the two classes of instruments is an important element in the musical design.

At A the violins in octaves lead off with the principal subject, the most characteristic feature of which is its continual repetition of that restless rhythm of two short notes and a long,  , which dominates and gives its main physiognomy to the whole movement; and what contributes to its restless and impassioned character is the fact that the first note of the opening phrase, wherever it recurs throughout the movement, is a passing discord, an *appogiatura* note preceding and falling on to the actual note proper to the harmony: thus at the opening, A, the subject, as far as its harmonic relations are concerned, should commence on *d*, the

[1] The main form of the composition might have been illustrated from an ordinary pianoforte arrangement, but to do this would be to confirm general readers in the erroneous and incomplete idea they mostly have as to the manner in which an orchestral composition is arranged, and even as to the true form of many of the details, such as the special form of accompaniment Mozart has employed in the inner string parts,

 &c., which cannot possibly be represented on the piano.

Ex. 25.



To face page 56.


Str.
Str.
L
Wind.
Wind.
K
cres.
Wind.
tr
tr
f
sf
M
Wind.
p
Str.
N
W.
p
W. & Str.
sf
f
f
Str.
f
p
f
W. & Str.
Wind.
Str.
W. & Str.
Wind.
O
W. & Str.

fifth of the chord; the *e* flat on which it actually commences is a note of melodic expression, having nothing to do with the harmonic combination at the moment; so again at AA, the *c* is the actual note proper to the harmony, the *d* is a passing note. The actual first subject closes at B; the following ten bars are passages continuing the general movement of the piece and leading to the resumption of the principal subject at E. And now we begin to see what it is that we are driving at in this form of composition. We are to introduce and make the most of a certain number of principal melodies of strongly marked and contrasted character, and which form the main elements of the composition, and we are to connect these principal melodies by passages which will seem naturally to arise out of and lead back to the principal melodies, and which, while inferior to the latter in definite form and expressive meaning, will have sufficient interest to engage the listener's attention, and lead him on to the next stage in the composition. Thus, immediately after B we have an expressive passage of four bars for the violins, then at C the wind instruments for the first time enter with an answering phrase, and at D wind and strings combine in a passage of powerful climax, evidently a "lead" to something beyond; so we find, for it is suddenly hushed, and at E the strings recommence the principal subject, but which is now linked in a charming way to the preceding passage by that quiet gliding down of the wind instruments in thirds (E), below the strings. Let the reader notice in the loud passage, D, the peculiar significance of that  for the strings in octaves; that not only serves to give point and movement to the music, but it is a distinct reference to the *rhythm* of the leading phrase of the principal subject—two shorts and a long; the melody of the subject does not appear there, but its special rhythm is kept in mind and recalled. It is in this kind of way, as we shall see again in

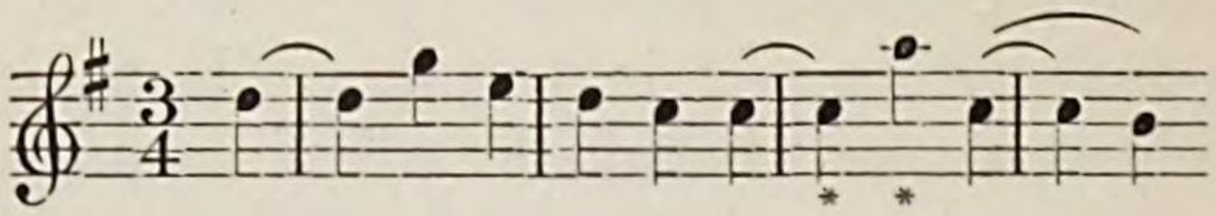
an example from Beethoven, that unity and relationship in design is kept up through a composition.

At E, as observed, the principal subject is repeated, for the reason shadowed forth on page 6, in the parallel drawn between extension in space and extension in time. The picture can be gazed at as long as we please, till we have taken it all in; the musical theme is only heard at the moment, and has to be repeated in order that we may become more fully acquainted with it. But it is not a bald repetition; it is set forth this time in new colouring from the accompanying sustained notes of the wind instruments, which form a kind of *encadrement* amid which the melody for the strings moves. Instead of ending as before, the subject modulates into B flat, and at F a new though subsidiary subject is started, the most striking feature of which is the group of three short sharp notes at G, repeated again in the next bar; this should not be overlooked, for it is put to a new use and made an important feature in the second part of the symphony. The rest of this part of the work, down to H, consists of vigorous passages working up to another climax preparatory to the entry of the real "second subject" of the composition. The second subject is always given in a different key from the principal one; and when the movement is in a minor key, as here, the second subject is usually in the most nearly related major key, which in this case is B flat. Accordingly the close just before H is in F, the dominant harmony of B flat, which leads the ear to expect the latter key. It will be observed that at this point the composition comes to a dead stop, and a pause of a whole bar intervenes between this and the entry of the second subject. This is Mozart's way here; the music, as Sir G. Grove has happily expressed it, "drawing up and presenting arms" to await the second subject; Beethoven would in most cases have introduced a passage leading into the second subject without any break; and Mozart has been blamed by some recent critics for his want of æsthetic perception in habitually

leaving this break in his work before the entry of the second subject. It is quite certain, however, that this was not the result of any want of power to make a more artistic connection, for no musician ever showed such finish and resource in regard to the invention of connecting passages as Mozart; and therefore we must suppose that this treatment seemed to him the most effective. In his Symphony in C there can be no question that the second subject gains immensely in effect from the pause before its introduction, and from the contrast of its naïve grace and beauty with the impetuous character of the preceding passage; and I am not sure that the same may not be said in this case. However, as the declared object of the "Sonata form" of composition is to blend together various melodies into one whole, it is perhaps logical to conclude that the most complete development of it is that in which the connection of all the parts is the closest and most unbroken.

After H commences the exquisitely tender and expressive second subject, which, it will be observed, is a kind of antiphon between the strings and wind instruments, the second phrase being played by the latter in response to the opening one from the violins. The reader will see that any one hearing this theme merely played on a pianoforte would get a false idea of it, as he would lose the effect of the contrast of tone and the response between "strings" and "wind." The ascending passage at K is a bridge only, leading to the repetition of the subject, but with the instrumentation reversed, the part played by the strings the first time being now given to wind, and *vice versâ*. This little interchange of effect may be taken by the reader as typical of a whole class of contrasts of effect and expression which are obtainable in orchestral music by varying the arrangement of the instruments and the manner in which phrases are distributed among them. The "bridge" passage at K is not made any further use of in the composition, except that it reappears, with due regard to symmetry, on the return of the same subject in the second

part of the movement. With Beethoven, however, it often happens that a phrase at first put in, like this, merely to bridge over a gap, is unexpectedly taken up aftewards and made a prominent feature in the second part of the movement; as if the composer had at first put it in thoughtlessly, and it had afterwards occurred to him that something more might be made of it. One example may be given here, while we are on the subject; from the pianoforte Sonata in E minor, Op. 90. The following melody forms part of the opening subject:

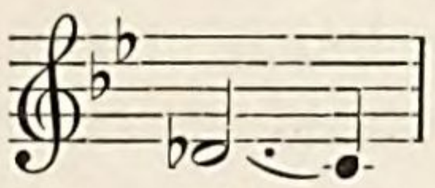
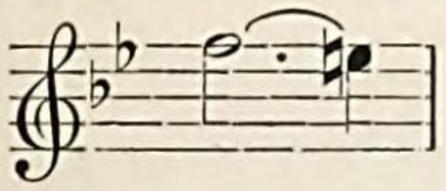


In a subsequent portion of the movement Beethoven selects this particular phrase for amplification, treating it first in the treble and then in the bass, and then he suddenly lays hold of the two notes marked with an asterisk in the above quotation, and evolves a new and striking feature out of them, thus:

Ex. 26.





To return to our Mozart Symphony; after K the second subject is repeated, but its close is interrupted at L by a passage leading up to a full close on the first note of the bar marked M. This is the preparation for the wind-up of the first part of the movement, and the object of the passage from L to M is to connect the tender and impassioned second subject with the brilliant close at M. This is done in the most artistic manner in the passage commencing at L, where the phrase  is four times repeated. This phrase is the same as the opening phrase of the second subject  , only in a new key and with a new stress and movement imparted to it, so that, while recalling the second subject, it seems to expand in the most natural manner into the *crescendo* which leads to the burst of the *forte*, where the D natural succeeds suddenly to the D flat, like a blaze of light. There could not be a more striking instance than this of Mozart's exquisite art in connecting one passage with another of a totally different character, yet so as to appear as if the one were the natural growth from the other.

From M to the double bar is the wind-up of the first part, in which it is desired to produce as energetic and exciting an effect as possible, as well as to recall and sum up what has gone before. First there is a vigorous unison phrase starting at M, which at first sight seems a little irrelevant, but which on consideration will be seen to be in reality a kind of inver-

sion of the last phrase of the second subject (the three bars preceding K); this leads to a scale passage landing us at N. Here follows a passage, twice repeated, in which the first phrase of the opening subject is recalled and played with, the wind instruments answering one another with it while the strings play an accompaniment, the strings in turn taking it up vigorously at the *forte* passage. Then there is a rapid scale passage in unison, twice repeated,[1] to lead up energetically to the close at O, in which latter passage it will be seen that the same phrase and the same alternating harmonies (tonic and dominant) are repeated through four bars. The precise manner in which this is done is a little old-fashioned from the point of view of the present day, but some such repetition at this point is frequently necessary, and frequently admitted even in the most advanced modern music, to give a strong definition to the finish of the section; just as in written music we mark the end of a composition to the eye by repeated strokes: 

[1] This is, I suppose, the kind of passage which has given such offence to Mr. Hubert Parry, who, in his article on "Form," in Grove's *Dictionary of Music*, observes, with that felicity of English style and construction which appears to be a peculiar prerogative of the "advanced" school of musical critics, that "with Haydn and Mozart it is frequent to find (*sic*) very sweet tunes, and sometimes very serious and pregnant tunes, in each of the primary sections, and then a lot of scurrying about(*sic*) —'brilliant passages,' as they are often called, the only purpose of which is to mark the cadence, or point out that the tune which is just finished is in such or such a key." As long as instrumental music remains a matter of tonal structure in subordination to organized form, it will be necessary to introduce passages to emphasize the salient divisions of that form, and increased energy of movement is one of the most effective methods of doing this; and it must be remembered that such passages *ought not* to have the same depth and significance of meaning as the principal subject; they are subordinate decoration. And when Mr. Parry tells his readers that there was nothing that Beethoven abhorred more than "brilliant passages," he is saying what the master's own works contradict over and over again. In his last pianoforte Sonata, which the advanced critics themselves are prone to speak of as his greatest, the whole of the Variations movement, after the second variation, is nothing but a string of "brilliant passages," page after page.

The first part of the "Sonata form" of composition always ends in a different key from the commencement: this work being in G minor, the first part ends (according to the usual practice) in the nearest related major key, B flat; if the movement had been in G major, the usual practice would be to end in the key of the dominant of G, viz. D major. The close here is at the last chord but one; the very last chord before the double bar is merely for the purpose of modulating back into G minor for the repeat. The æsthetic reason for the repeat (æsthetic and physical combined, we may say) has been already explained. After the first part has been repeated, the same transition chord serves to lead onward to the second part, on the other side of the double bar. The opening of the second part is one of the most interesting and important portions of the composition, and one in which the real constructive power of the composer is most tested. It is the point at which what is called the "working-out" commences, when the materials which have already been made use of in the first part are to be presented with new treatment and in new combinations. The work we are discussing proceeds as follows (Ex. 27) immediately after the double bar closing the first part; the two first chords being, like the last one before the double bar, merely for the purpose of modulation :—

Ex. 27.





After these, Mozart commences with a repetition of the passage in thirds for the wind instruments, which accompanies the repeat of the principal subject in the first part (E, Ex. 25); this lands us in F♯ minor, about as far from the original key of the piece as we can get, and the strings immediately commence the original first subject in this key, and repeat this through one or two further modulations, when a new treatment appears, in that the principal subject, hitherto only heard in the treble, is transferred to the bass (Ex. 28), the violins playing a new counterpoint to it instead of the original mere accompaniment figure of the first part:—

Ex. 28.

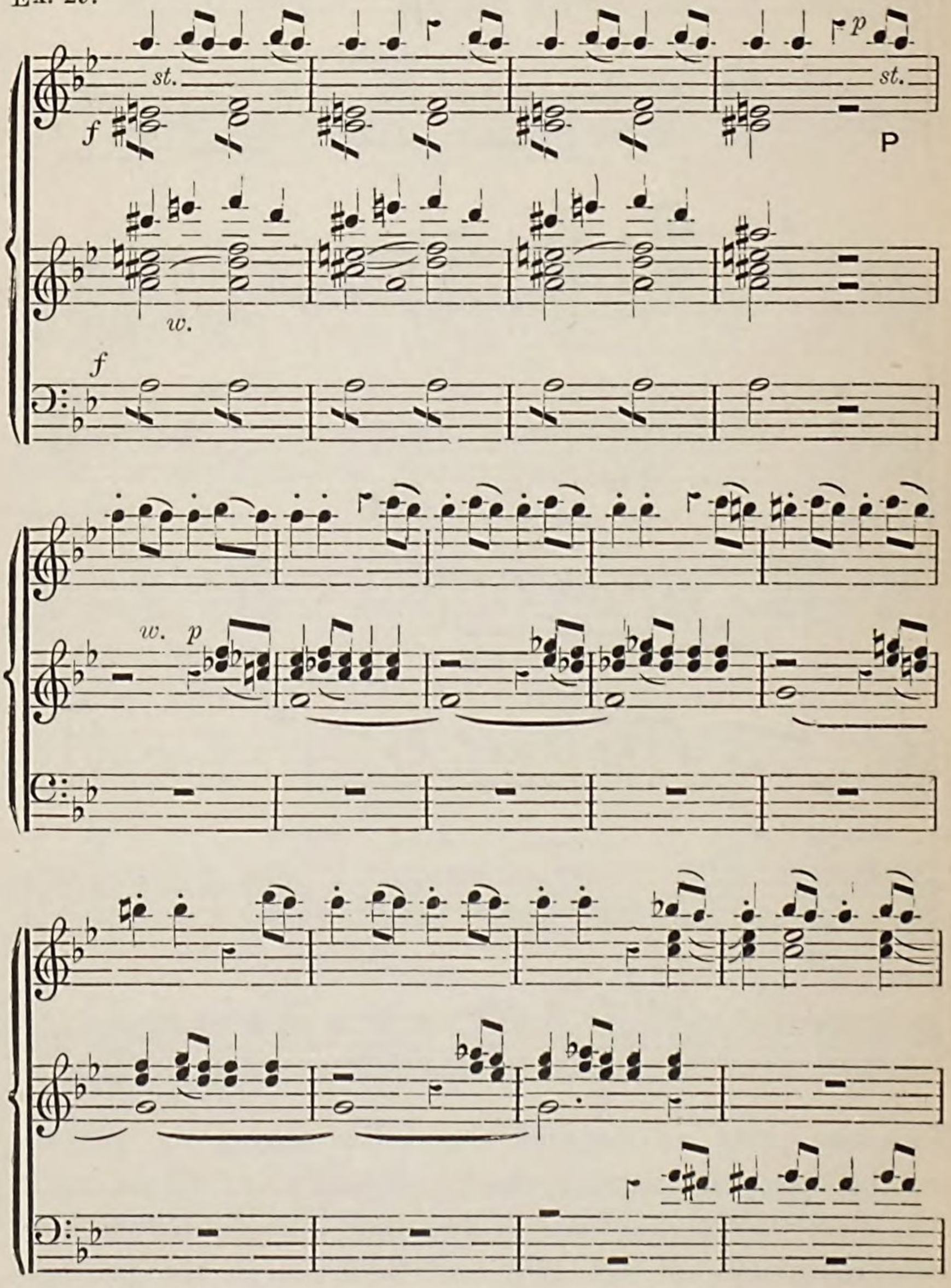




Then the parts are reversed, the violins taking the subject and the basses the counterpoint figure, and so on till we come to a close on the dominant of D minor, a nearly related key (commencement of Ex. 29), and then comes the passage

by which we return to the first subject in its original form and key. We will quote this passage in full (Ex. 29), as it is one of the most remarkable examples of Mozart's graceful fancy and delicacy of perception in treating this portion of a composition :—

Ex. 29.



R R

f

S

f

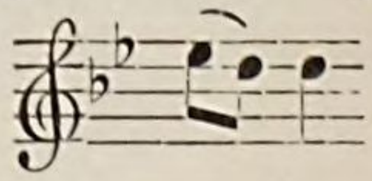
> st. > st. >

w. w.

wind

st.



The whole of this passage commencing at P, is a play on the first phrase of the principal subject,  which the instruments appear to be trying at and suggesting to each other in all kinds of positions, as if they were in quest of the right thing and could not get at it; the wind instruments answering the suggestions of the strings in detached hints (R); at S there is a more resolute feeling expressed, the basses taking up and repeating the phrase in a very decisive manner; but it is not till we get to the dropping passage for wind instruments alone at T that we feel that we are getting near the answer to the reiterated question, until at V the violins quietly and almost imperceptibly steal in with the first bars of the original subject, the development of which is resumed as at the opening of the composition.

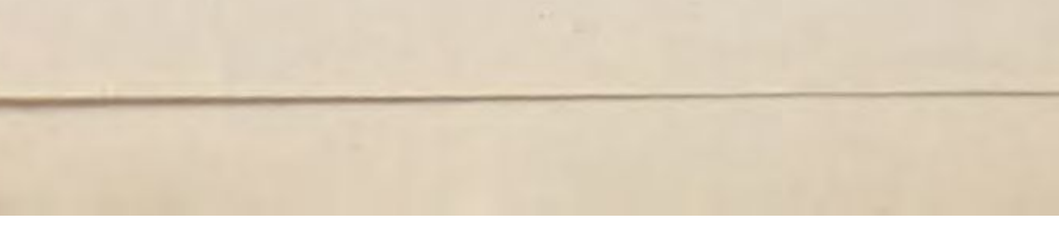
After this point the general design of the first part of the movement is repeated with little alteration; the second subject appears this time in the key of the piece, G minor, which of course also ends in that key; much that was before heard in B flat being now repeated in G minor. But there is one important new feature. In Ex. 25 the reader's attention was drawn to the subordinate subject introduced at F, and to the prominently marked phrase in it at G. At the point where this subject is introduced again in the second part of the movement, Mozart, instead of merely going once through it, as in the first part, proceeds to develop it in a new manner by transferring it to the bass with a counterpoint for the violins above it (W, Ex. 30), and then again by introducing an

Ex. 30.





additional feature at X in the shape of an imitation of the leading phrase by the first violins half a bar behind the basses, the second violins continuing the counterpoint figure. The bold design of the imitation phrase for the violins should be noticed, with its wide interval at the close,



which again gives a new point and vigour to the passage. The whole of this rather intricate passage from X to the end of the quotation, with its suspended discords sustained by the

wind instruments, is as clear as crystal: there is not a note misplaced, not a note too much in it. Mozart may have planned this extra development of the phrase in question from the first, but to the listener the effect is as if the composer had suddenly bethought him, "we will get something more out of this." It is on such sudden and happily contrived surprises of construction that much of the sustained interest of a great instrumental composition depends.

This movement of Mozart is an ideally perfect type of what is known as the "Sonata-form" in composition, a title which must not be confounded with the word "sonata" as ordinarily applied. Musical nomenclature, like the scale and the notation, has had a spontaneous and rather irregular development, and consequently contains a good many anomalies and secondary applications of terms. By "sonata" in common parlance we now understand a composition of several movements,[1] for one instrument. But the "Sonata-form" means the form of composition which has been most generally adopted for the first and most important movement of a symphony or sonata, such as the one we have been analyzing. Its adoption has been entirely arbitrary; there is no reason in the nature of things why any other imaginable form might not have been adopted; its suitability, expressiveness and dignity, have led to its wide acceptance in music, just as similar qualities in the Greek order of column, capital, and entablature have led to its wide acceptance in architecture. To parody the famous dictum about a certain fruit, it may be said that "doubtless man might have invented a better form for instrumental music, but doubtless he never has." The common practice of the greatest instrumental composers since Haydn has shown their concurrence

[1] "Movement" is another vague-sounding term, which is applied now to each main division of a symphony, concerto, or sonata. Thus, if a sonata consists of an *allegro*, *adagio*, and *presto*, it is said to consist of three "movements." The word supplies a definition which was wanted for convenience, and no better one has been invented; that is all that can be said for it.

in this feeling; Beethoven has adopted this form for the opening movements of all his symphonies and concertos, and nearly all his sonatas; and where he does not employ it in the first movement he often does in the last, as in the "Moonlight Sonata" and the Sonata in A, Op. 101; in both these cases the last movements are the most important part of the work (contrary to the general practice). Generally speaking it has been felt by composers that the *finale* of a symphony or sonata should be in a rather lighter form than the opening movement, but this also depends on the whole scheme of the composition. In the Symphony in C minor, in which the *finale* is of unusually important and pompous character, Beethoven employs the Sonata-form in its entirety both in the first and last movements.

The usefulness of the analysis we have been making of the Sonata-form is therefore that, in the first place, it gives us a key to the general design and intention of the principal movements of the great works of instrumental music. Although there are few modern works that are so symmetrically designed as Mozart's, still amid all the differences of detail and style the general principle is the same, and the knowledge of the form in its most symmetrical aspect furnishes the key to the design of all works which adopt that form in its main outlines. But the study of this most highly elaborated form has also an educational value in teaching the general appreciation of musical form, and preparing the hearer to follow and understand other formal relations, to look for the relation of one theme to another, to understand the reference which is made in one passage to another which has preceded it; and, generally, to hear music not only with the spirit but with the understanding also.

Of the lighter forms in which instrumental music is cast the most important are the *Rondo*, the *Ternary* form, and the *Variations* form.[1] The rondo has one leading subject which

[1] The modern *Overture*, in its most usual form, is in fact a Sonata-form movement with a short introductory movement prefixed to it.

is returned to at successive points of the movement, always in the same key, but interrupted by a middle portion with a different and contrasted subject, after which the original one is returned to. A beautiful and highly symmetrical example is the well-known rondo which closes the *Sonate Pathétique* of Beethoven. The Ternary Form, as its name implies, has three main divisions; the first in which a subject is given out and repeated an indefinite number of times, with some variation of treatment, but closing in the same key in which it began; a second division in which a new subject is introduced in another but closely related key, beginning and ending again in the same key; a third division in which the original subject and key are resumed and may be treated in a new manner, or the subject of the second part may be combined with it, but no new melodies are introduced. This is a favourite form for the slow movement of a symphony or sonata; a familiar example of it is the Funeral March in Beethoven's Sonata in A flat, Op. 26, though here the middle portion is unusually short; a more typical example is the Largo of the Sonata in E flat, Op. 7. The Variations-form, as its name implies, consists of a number of successive variations upon a given theme, forming really a string of short pieces all based on the same idea and designed in the same proportions, but varied in detail, in elaboration of ornament, and in other ways that occur to the composer. Beethoven imparted to the Variations-form a dignity and importance which it never attained in the hands of any previous composer. Some of the finest and most serious movements in his pianoforte works are in this form, the two most remarkable examples being the variations which form the concluding movements of the Sonatas in E and C minor (Op. 109 and 111 respectively); and the *finale* to the Eroica Symphony and the slow movement of the Ninth Symphony are in fact variation movements, though not expressly labelled so.

There is one feature frequently found in important com-

positions in all these forms, which should be mentioned, viz.' the *coda* (Anglicé, the "tail"), which may be defined as being a prolongation of the movement beyond the point at which its form is complete, and it might close, in order to give greater dignity and importance to the close: instead of a final chord merely, we have a final passage of several or sometimes of many bars. The *coda* may repeat some part of the previous materials of the composition—a kind of summing up; or it may, as is more often the case, introduce a new phrase of its own, in keeping with the general character of the movement, and calculated to give an effective or expressive termination to it. As an example of a short coda, and of its use, we may quote the one from the Funeral March in Beethoven's A flat Sonata. At the end of the first part of the March the close is made thus—



and that is quite a sufficiently marked termination for the close of the first division; but when the same passage recurs at the end of the second part, this phrase is felt by the composer to be too curt as a termination of the whole movement, and instead he adds this—

Ex. 31.





None of the phrases here have occurred in the previous part of the composition, but they are in keeping with its expression and rhythm; they constitute a little design in itself, added to the closing chord to prolong the feeling of the movement and lead it to a more solemn and less sudden close. This introduction of new matter in the *coda* is perfectly consistent with the principle of unity of design before insisted on, because it must be remembered that the *coda* is *not* part of the composition itself, which is finished; it is a passage added to prolong the finishing phrase and prevent the close seeming too abrupt. Compositions which are of a light, playful, or piquant character may dispense with a *coda*, though they often have one; a composition of serious character, and especially of a brilliant and pompous expression, generally seems to demand one. The effect of the omission or addition of the *coda* in such cases may be illustrated for the general reader by reference to two very well known and popular compositions. Numbers of people, not musicians, must have felt, in listening to Mendelssohn's *Cornelius* March, a sense of dissatisfaction at the sudden way in which the march seems to be snipped off short at the close. The fact is, it wants a *coda*, and had it been published during

the composer's lifetime he would probably have added one. On the other hand, the brilliant effect of climax at the close of the Wedding March (a composition which has been so hackneyed and vulgarized that one can hardly recognize now what a fine thing it really is) is due to the admirably conceived *coda* at the close, which seems to sum up all the joyous and triumphant expression of the foregoing music in those successive *fanfare* phrases, lit up by the glitter of the long shakes that accompany them. Any one who will try the experiment of playing that March through and stopping short before the *coda* will obtain a crucial demonstration of the importance of this feature in musical design.

The composition by Mozart which we have taken as illustrating the Sonata form is the work of a composer in whom the feeling for logical and symmetrical form was very predominant, and who was especially strong in construction. It will throw a further light on the subject if we take an example of a high-class composition of a different type, by a composer who was less of a constructor and more of an imaginative poet in music, in which, nevertheless, we shall trace the same aim at consistency of design, and find the effect of many passages is largely dependent on their relation to the whole as well as on their intrinsic beauty. We will take for this purpose the *Allegretto* of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, a composition in a form not easy to label under any of the recognised definitions, but one of the most expressive and poetically suggestive pieces of music ever written.

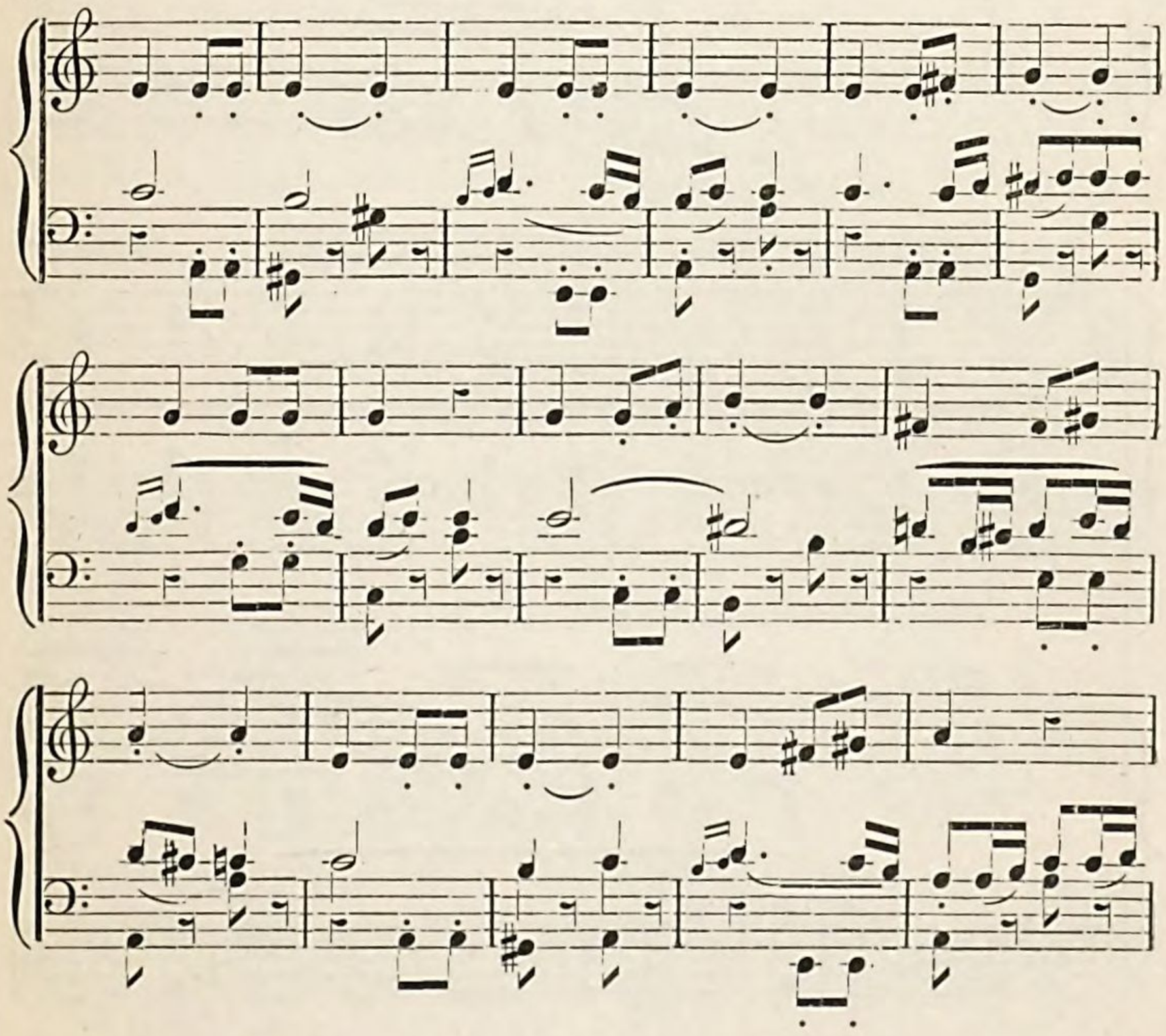
Ex. 32.





The movement is preluded by one long chord from the wind instruments—which let the reader note; its significance will appear later on. The strange and mysterious subject, a kind of march in the dark, is then commenced by the lower strings without the violins; at the end of the quotation the last passage is repeated *pianissimo.* Then comes the first repetition of it (Ex. 33), with an important new feature in the shape of a melody for the violoncellos and violas (tenor violins)—

Ex. 33.



the last portion being again repeated *pianissimo*. The whole passage is gone through twice again, each time with more elaboration of detail, the last repeat being for the full orchestra, *ff*. Then follows the new subject in the major key (Ex. 34), introduced by a brief link passage (A) con-

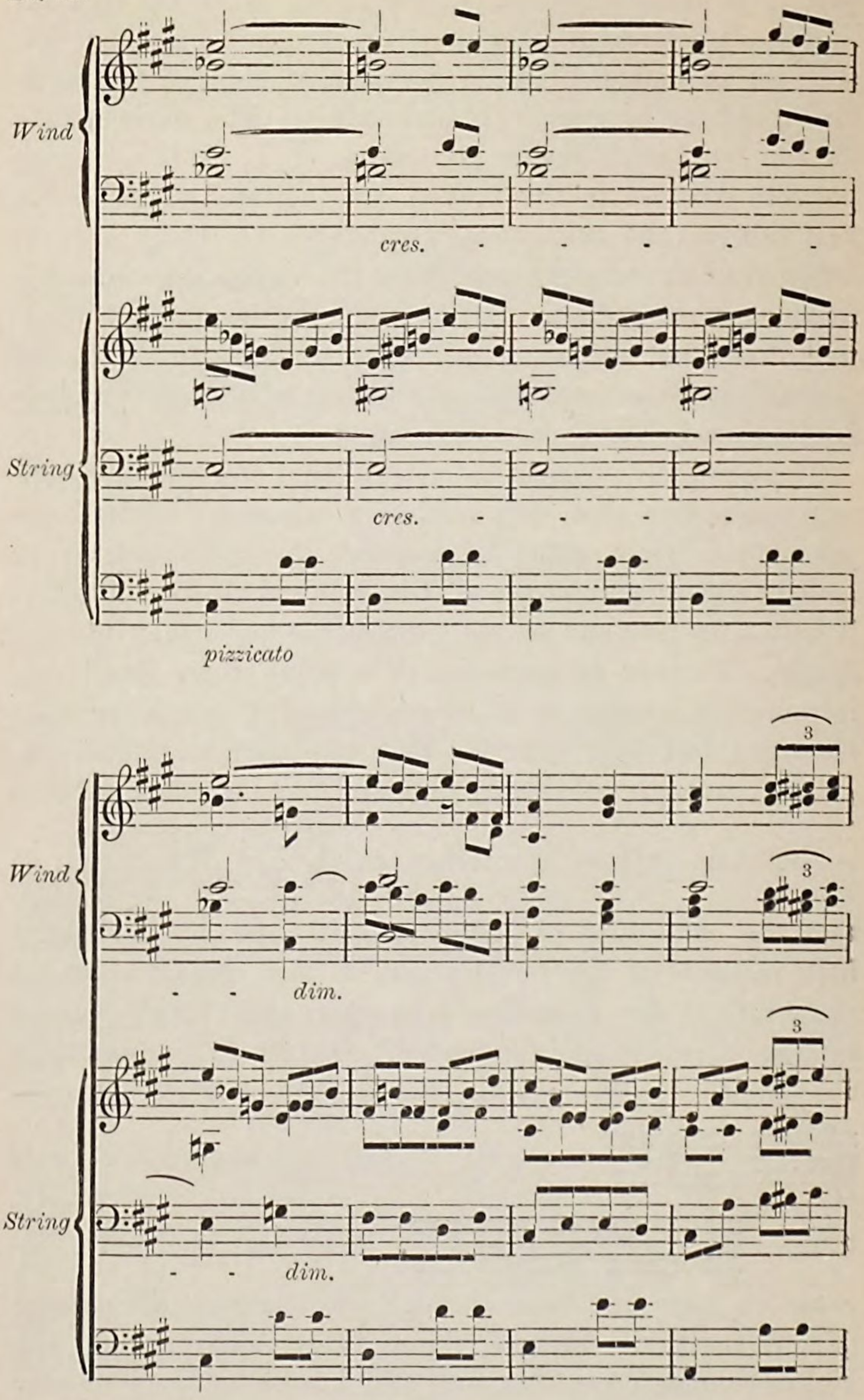
Ex. 34.



taining a melodic phrase for the violin, which undergoes a significant alteration later on. At B commences the new subject; as before, I give a compressed copy of the score, distinguishing between wind and strings. The suave melody for the wind instruments in octaves, at B, is the greatest possible contrast to the broken and agitated style of the first subject, and this effect is enhanced by the gentle undulation of the triplet passages for the violins, on which the melody seems to float. But in the bass the agitated pulsation of the first subject is still kept up beneath the flow of the melody above; and again further on, where a new melody is introduced (Ex. 35 : see next page).

There are few passages in instrumental music more poetically suggestive than this restless movement, like the beating of the heart, going on beneath the calm and tender melody above; and, poetic as it is, it is strictly logical too, as it unites the first and second parts of the movement into one design. Further on we come to a point where Beethoven introduces a passage in strict counterpoint, as a contrasting element; but here we see that the subject treated (A, Ex. 36), though melodically different from the first subject, is the same rhythm or measure as  , so that the connection of design is again kept up. A striking little instance of Beethoven's care in this respect occurs at the return of the second subject, where the "link" passage leading to it is again repeated. On its first appearance the phrase for the violins (Ex. 31, A) is written thus—  ; at its second appearance it reads thus—  . Why this change? Because we have just been through the counterpoint passage (Ex. 36) with its running figure in semiquavers, and the violins cannot forget that, and still have a tendency to play

Ex. 35.



the same kind of passage. It is as if the composer said to us, "We have been here before, but do not let us forget all we have passed through since then." It is one of the most

Ex. 36.

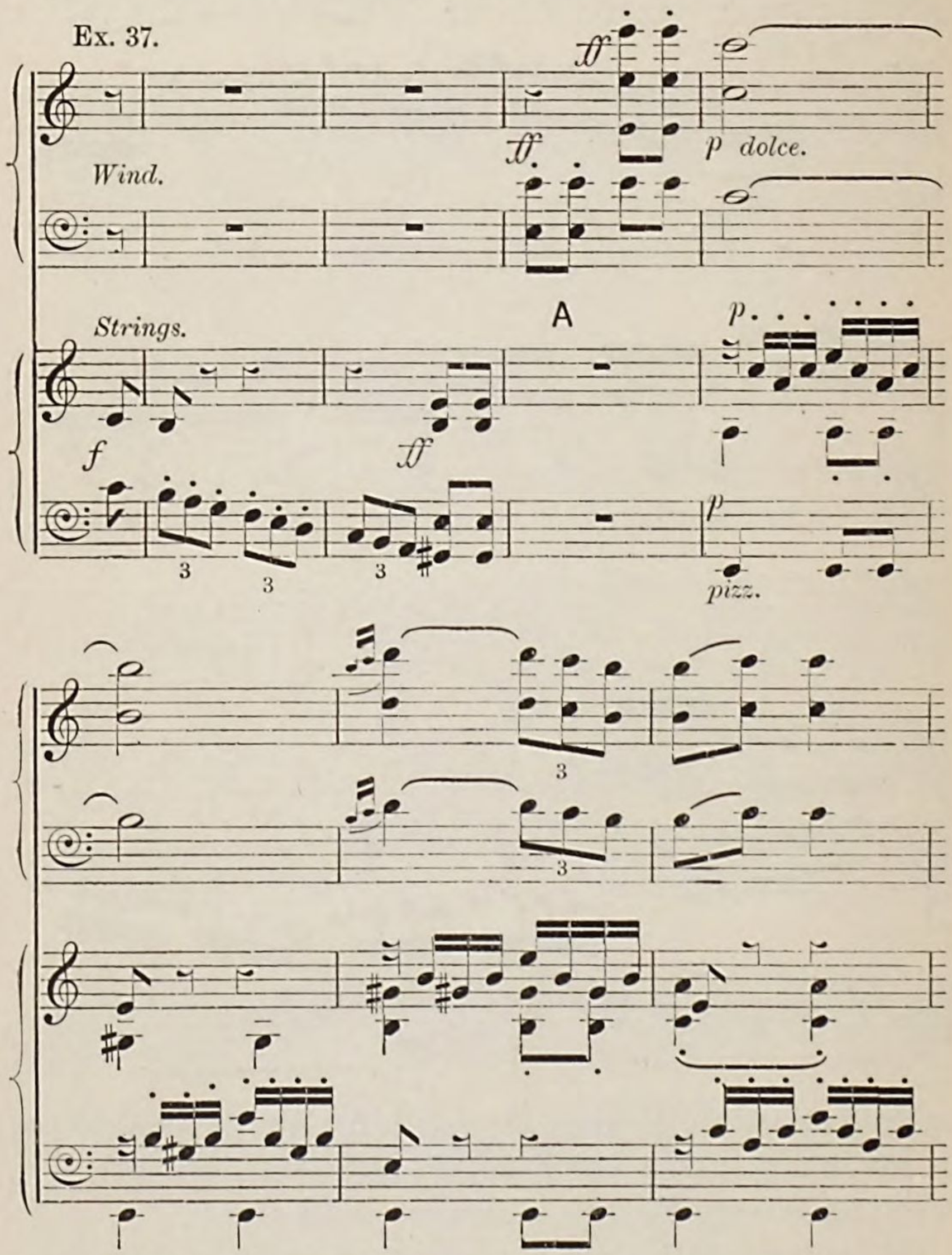


delicate of artistic touches, though it may be doubted if one person in a thousand who hears the Symphony is aware of it —among average English audiences, at all events.

One only blemish there is on the symmetry of this movement, which it is curious to note, where a sudden return to the subject seems to be made as if in a moment of irritation,

by the brusque interposition of the passage at A in Ex. 37; that bar is the only one in which the characteristic rhythm running all through the movement is for a moment dropped, and instead of the crotchet and two quavers we have four strongly marked quavers in the bar:—

Ex. 37.



I have always felt this to be a momentary blemish on an otherwise perfect composition. The passage succeeding that

bar is interesting as showing one of Beethoven's ways of varying the treatment and accompaniment of the subject, so as to give a new effect to it. The close of the movement brings us another of this composer's subtle and imaginative suggestions; it can only be fully appreciated in connection with the whole preceding passage (Ex. 38). This passage consists of what may be called broken ejaculations from various groups of instruments, under their breath, recalling the first phrase of the original theme, and finally closed by that same long chord from the wind instruments which was heard at the commencement of the movement, and nowhere else :—

Ex. 38.





The significance of this final chord for the wind instruments depends almost entirely on the fact that it is introduced both at the commencement and the close of the composition. As in the case of the "fringe" of Mozart's Minuet (Ex. 23), if introduced only once it might be regarded as an accident or an excrescence; but, placed as it is, it is full of meaning; it is the portal through which we enter into and pass out of the enchanted ground. Perhaps it would be impossible to find in all music two simple chords so full of poetic significance as these; a significance which arises entirely from their position in the general design of the movement.

Thus we see that in the two important compositions we have been analyzing, differing entirely in form and spirit, and by two composers whose genius was very different in character and tendency, we nevertheless find in both the same attention to consistency and continuity of form, even in regard to very minute details, and the same manner of evolving a long composition out of a few leading melodies. If the reader say, Why should we not avoid this repetition, and why may we not have a wealth of successive melodies all new? the answer is, first, that owing to the conditions under which music is made manifest to our senses (see page 6, *ante*), we *must* have repetition in order to fully take in the tone-picture presented to the ear; and secondly, that the process of combining a few leading ideas into an organized tone-structure is the way to avoid, not to produce, monotony of effect. A composition consisting of a series of successive new melodies, however beautiful, unrepeated and not co-ordinated according to any predominating design, would soon be wearisome, and in the æsthetic sense monotonous to the ear; as it would simply seem to be music wandering on aimlessly, without beginning, middle, or ending, with no episodes to vary its course, and no climax to look forward to. And, moreover, to pour out one melody after another (supposing the composer's imagination equal to this) would only be to throw them away in waste; for, if a melody is a really fine one, all that is in it is not brought out except by the varied presentations it goes through in the course of the development of the design. Take Beethoven's *Allegretto*, which we have just been examining: the mere playing over of the theme would not reveal to us all that is in it; it is only when we have heard it treated in all these different ways, variously instrumented, variously accompanied, varied slightly in its own form, treated contrapuntally, &c. (and through the whole composition it is never once repeated in precisely the same form), that we feel that we have got at the heart of it,

and derived from it all the pathos and all the expression of which it is capable.

In regard to the combination of several movements which goes to make up the total form of a Sonata or a Symphony, there is again, as in the single movement, one form which has been most commonly accepted as the best, and which, like the arrangement of the "Sonata-form" movement, has grown up by a kind of common consent, rather than by any arbitrary selection based on principle. This is the plan of composition in four movements: a quick movement of a large and dignified character, sometimes preceded by a slow introduction (which latter is regarded as an addition at pleasure, and outside the requirements of the form); a slow movement of some length and development, generally about equal in length to the opening movement; a short quick movement of a light character; and a longer and more important one which forms the *finale*. There is by no means the same closely logical connection between these four movements in an instrumental composition as there is between the several portions of a single movement. Their places may be changed, or an entirely different arrangement of movements may be made, without in any way infringing on musical logic. But, on the whole, no form has been invented which is so effective and so satisfying to the mind as this, and the greatest instrumental composers have shown that they felt it so by their general allegiance to it. In Mozart's day, the third short movement, which at that date was always a minuet (and formed the only part of a Symphony in which a dance-form was retained in its original shape), was usually omitted in Sonatas for single instruments, but Mozart and Haydn habitually employed this same four-movement form in their Symphonies and Quartetts: Beethoven, so great an innovator in many ways, has kept to it in eight out of his nine Symphonies, and in the ninth the only essential departure from it is that the usual positions of the second and third move-

ments are interchanged. He employs it, in the three-movement form, in all his Concertos; six of the Quartetts keep to it in the four-movement form, two others in the three-movement; sixteen of his pianoforte Sonatas adhere to it—twelve in four movements, and four in three movements, and in some others with slight changes or transpositions only. He introduced a new and more brilliant form of third movement (the *Scherzo*) in place of the old minuet, to which, however, he still adhered at times even in his later works. Many of the best instrumental works since Beethoven's time have also adhered to this general form, and no one can be said to have improved on it. The first movement forms a stately opening to the work; the slow movement represents the pathetic side of the picture; the third movement is a piquant side-dish, gaining effect by contrast with the more solemn strains of the slow movement which has preceded it; the *finale* forms a brilliant close, sometimes of nearly equal importance with the first movement, but generally in a somewhat gayer and lighter strain.

Whether the separate movements of a Symphony or Sonata ought to have, or whether in the works of the great composers they actually have, any decided relationship to one another in style and feeling, is an interesting æsthetic question to which only a very vague reply can be given. It would be, in fact, almost impossible to define sufficiently: a first movement and *finale* which appear to one person to have a relation to each other in point of feeling may appear very differently to another. Mozart's three great Symphonies appear to me to present, respectively, a remarkable coherence and unity of feeling between their several movements; and this may be accounted for by the known fact that all of them were composed very quickly, and therefore probably under the same mood of feeling. In Beethoven's Symphonies the one in C minor appears to me to be the only one which conveys a decided impression of having been conceived as a whole, and with a definite poetic relation between the several move-

ments. The *Eroica* Symphony professes to be so, but the two last movements have no obvious connection with the professed subject, the last one being in fact made up from an old theme. There is a very perceptible unity of character about the Fourth Symphony, which gives the impression of its having been composed in a short time and during the same phase of feeling. In some of the pianoforte Sonatas there is an expressed, in others an unexpressed, unity of feeling and idea; but the latter is only to be felt, and cannot be analyzed. In other instances there seems no necessary link of association whatever between the separate movements. What possible relation is traceable, for instance, between the Funeral March in the Sonata, Op. 26, and the *Toccata* movement which follows it—unless it be the mere perception that the gloom of the Funeral March required the relief of a brilliant movement after it?

We may therefore conclude that the relation of the various movements of a composition to each other in regard to character and expression is one which cannot be defined by law or reduced to analysis; that there may be a unity of style between them which is perceptible to the æsthetic sense, and which, where existing, gives a higher perfection of form to the work, but that the highest enjoyment may nevertheless be obtained from a series of four movements which have no obvious relation to each other except that of forming effective or pathetic contrasts. There has been an attempt made in modern music—an attempt of which Liszt was the principal pioneer—to form a new and more definite kind of link between the various movements of a composition by a process called the "metamorphosis of themes," referred to on another page,[1] which consists in using the same melody as the principal subject throughout all the divisions of the work, only altering it in various ways, varying the rhythm, or varying the precise intervals of the notes and preserving the general form. It has been attempted to father this on

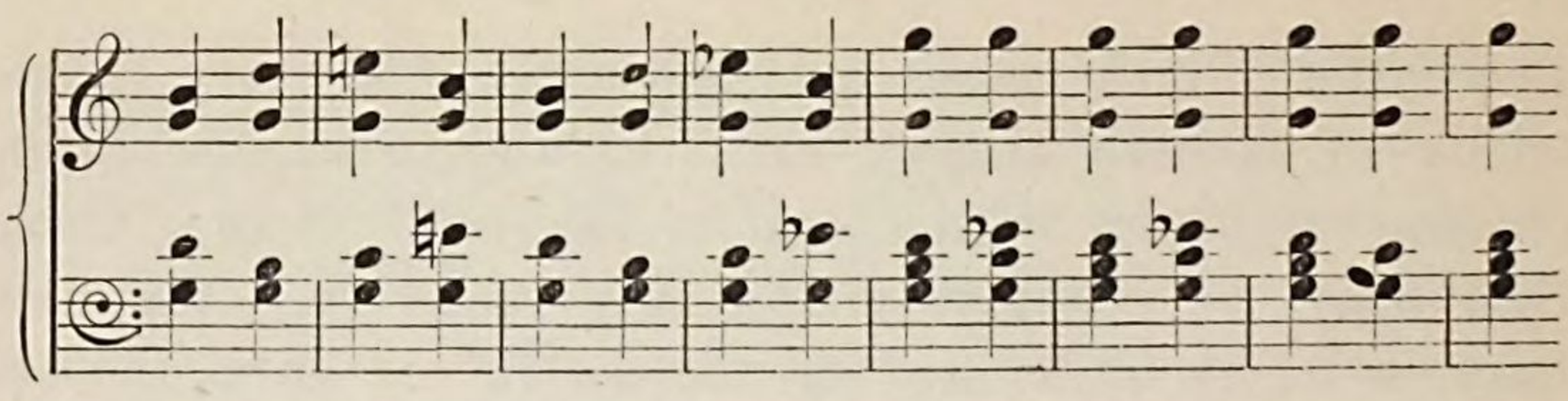
[1] See Chapter VI.

Beethoven (who is now made responsible for every eccentricity of modern music), but, with the exception of an obvious treatment of this kind in the *finale* of the Ninth Symphony, the instances of it in his works are so few, and have to be so far-fetched by the doctrinaire critic, that it would be absurd to call it characteristic of his art. It is a contrivance which sounds very logical in theory, but which in practice does not much tend to increase the interest or beauty of a composition: it has been, in fact, a prominent characteristic in some of the most cacophonous music that has ever been written, and its chief value seems to lie in the fact that it provides a composer whose power of melodic invention is limited with an excuse to make one melody serve where otherwise he must have felt called on to produce half-a-dozen.

There are two minor or secondary elements in musical design which ought not to be overlooked here. One of these lies in the form taken by accompanying "figures," as they are called, which form an element quite apart from either the melodic or harmonic design of the composition—a purely decorative element we may say. We may illustrate this by taking a well-known theme, and presenting it reduced to its simple elements of melody and harmony, as in Ex. 39:—

Ex. 39.





That is the subject of the Rondo in Beethoven's *Waldstein* Sonata, and the melody and the harmony of the passage are both completely represented there. Now let us take the passage as actually written (Ex. 40) :—

Ex. 40.

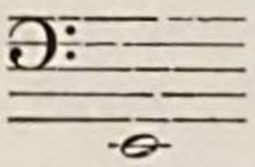
Allegro moderato.







Now what is it that Beethoven has added to the music there?—for neither melody nor harmony is altered. He has added an ornamental background, filling in the spaces of the main melodic design, just as in actual decoration we find a large foliage design, for instance, worked over a small diaper pattern as a ground. This decorative movement plays a very important part in the beauty and effect of instrumental music, and the power to invent good and varied "figures" for it is generally a characteristic of high musical genius. Beethoven had this power to a greater extent, probably, than any other composer, and a study of his accompaniment figures of this kind, and of the subtle variations he makes in their form according to the other circumstances of the composition, will show what care and attention he bestowed on this class of detail in his compositions, and what importance he attached to it. Bach and Mozart had the inventive faculty in this way highly developed, the former especially, though neither of them shows the inexhaustible variety of Beethoven in this respect. Mendelssohn's power of invention in figure-passages was limited, a fact which he knew and lamented himself; and it

is this deficiency which contributes very largely to the effect of monotony and repetition which characterizes his pianoforte music especially, beautiful as much of it is within its own lines. This kind of supplementary element in musical design may be shown, too, not only in brilliant and glittering figure-passages and rapidly moving accompaniments, but in features of a grander and graver type. A splendid example of the effect thus gained from accessory notes, which in no way affect either the melody or the harmony of the passage in which they occur, may be quoted from the *finale* of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, near the close of the work, where the movement is becoming continually more and more energetic in its hurry to the closing climax. In this passage, which is what in musical parlance is called a passage on "a dominant pedal," the bass is theoretically a long holding note on  ; but the pressure and movement of the whole is such that the bass *must* share it, and keeps slowly rocking to and fro between the E and the D sharp (Ex. 41). The D sharp in the bass here has nothing to do with the harmony at all: it is simply to impart movement to the bass, and to intensify the feeling, conveyed by the whole passage, that the great tone-structure has reached the climax of its development; it can rise no higher; already it is quivering to its apex; the very foundations are rocking under it, and our expectation is on the strain for the moment of the final crash. There is not a more telling stroke of genius in all the works of Beethoven than his treatment of the pedal bass in this passage.

The other secondary element of design referred to is that of tone or *timbre* (a word which suggests a shade of meaning not exactly represented by "tone"), which is only developed in compositions written for instruments of various classes and qualities of tone in combination, and only completely in music for a full band—"orchestral music" as it is termed,

Ex. 41. *Allegro con brio.*

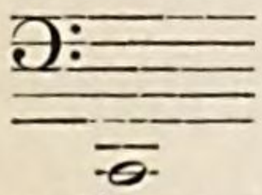




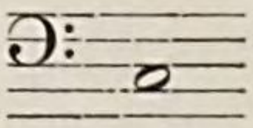
from being played by a body of executants mounted on the steps of an orchestra. The variation of tone which is produced by the employment of different classes of instruments is a phenomenon very closely allied, æsthetically, with the effect of colour in the painter's art; the one suggests the other to such a degree that musicians habitually speak of the "colouring" of a piece of orchestral music. Some writers have even attempted to assign the effect of special colours to special instruments, but this is little more than a pleasing fancy which cannot be carried out to any system. I myself always feel the sound of the trumpets as of a bright yellow, that of the horns as orange, that of the trombones as a deep heavy red, and that of the flutes as white; but I have no distinct association of colour with any other instruments, and probably those I have mentioned would be felt differently by other ears. Nevertheless, the general analogy of *timbre* in music with colour in painting is a perfectly true one. The course taken by a melody represents line or design, the special tone in which it is sounded represents colour. We may take an orchestral composition with its varied tones from different classes of instruments, and arrange it for the pianoforte, when we get

the design without the tone-colouring, just as in an engraving we get the design of the picture without the colour, but only a suggestion of its "values"; and just as a good engraver can so handle his work as to suggest the colour of the picture, so a pianist may, by variations of touch producing varieties of tone, suggest much of the colouring of the orchestra: the capacity to do this is, indeed, one of the "last, best gifts" of high-class pianoforte playing.

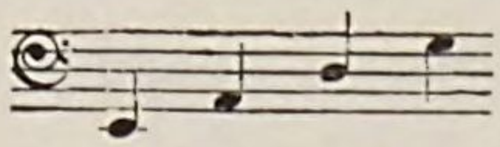
Among the average concert-going audiences in this country there is a remarkable degree of ignorance as to orchestral instruments and their special range of effect and expression, which deprives many people who really have a ear and a capacity for music of a great part of the enjoyment they might have from an orchestral work. They hear a volume of sound, but they do not distinguish its component parts or the reasons for employing one instrument or another in special passages. The sense of *timbre* requires in many persons, probably, to be trained and developed. You may try to draw the attention of a listener to the expressive effect of the thin tone of the oboe in a certain passage, and you will probably be met by the answer, "But I cannot distinguish the tone of the oboe." Every one who wishes to listen intelligently to orchestral music should at least know what are the classes of instruments employed, and the leading characteristics of each. A brief indication of them here may help to put some readers on the right track.

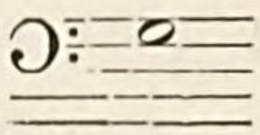
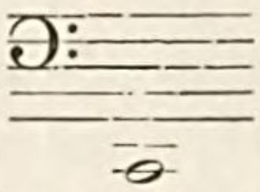
The modern orchestra, then, may be divided into four classes of instruments: *strings*, *wood wind* instruments, *brass wind* instruments, and *percussion* instruments. The strings consist of first and second violins; violas or tenor violins, which have a compass a fifth below the violins; violoncellos, which have a compass an octave lower than the violas, down to  ; and double-basses, which, according as they have three or four strings (for there are two varieties), extend

either to the A below or to the E below the violoncello C.[1] This forms the "string quartett," as it is called, forming the materials for a four-part string harmony, the basses in the majority of instances playing the same part as the violoncellos, an octave lower, but in modern music they not unfrequently have an independent part of their own. The strings form the foundation of the whole orchestra, and are in much larger numbers than the others, a fully-equipped band of the present day having about thirty violins, fifteen on each side, and the other strings in proportion.

The wood wind instruments consist ordinarily of two flutes, two oboes, two clarionets, and two bassoons; these, again, forming a little band of themselves for four-part harmony—flutes and oboes representing the treble; clarionets, with nearly the same compass upwards, but which range downwards nearly to the viola C,  ; and bassoons, with about the corresponding compass of violoncellos. In large bands two other instruments are added—a *piccolo* flute, sounding an octave above the flutes, and a double bassoon, sounding an octave below the bassoons. It should be observed that the clarionet cannot play with equal facility in all keys, and therefore instruments are made in different keys—C, B flat, and A; C and A being the most used. An A clarionet is one which sounds A when played as C—that is, it sounds a minor third lower than it is played; and the use of it is that if we have a composition, say in E, the four sharps of which would give trouble to the clarionet-player, the part is written in G for an A clarionet, and consequently sounds in E.

This kind of difficulty becomes greater in the case of the principal brass instruments—trumpets and horns—which can only play a limited number of notes, which are produced by

[1] In the article on "Double-basses," in Grove's *Dictionary of Music*, they are given as tuned  , the writer, by an odd oversight, having forgotten to point out that they sound an octave lower than that.

the inflection of lip and voice of the player; the notes following the natural series of harmonics (Ex. 12), though not including by any means all of these. Consequently, trumpets and horns have to be made in a good many keys, to admit of their use in pieces of all keys in the orchestra; their parts are always written in C, the actual notes depending on the key of the instrument. The trumpet is a treble instrument, ranging (in general practice) from  upwards; the horn a bass one, ranging from  . They are mostly used in a fragmentary way in the orchestra, bringing in their special notes where they can be effective, or passages are written for them of a special character suited to their capacities. In a small orchestra there will be two trumpets and two horns; in a large one there may be two couples of each in different keys—sometimes more, but this is exceptional. The trombones, though also brass wind instruments, are really of a very different class from horns and trumpets, as by means of their slides they can play all the notes of the scale.[1] There are almost always three employed—alto, tenor, and bass.

Of the percussion instruments, the most important by far, and for the most part the only one used in high-class orchestral music, is the kettledrum, so called because it consists of a large copper vessel, somewhat like an ordinary boiler, with parchment stretched over the mouth. The kettledrum is the only percussion instrument which can be tuned (by stretching the parchment more or less); the others are merely so much noise. It is generally used in pairs, tuned to the keynote and fifth of the scale, but other combinations of tuning may be used for special effect, and three kettledrums can be

[1] The trombone-player produces the notes of the harmonic series, in the same way as the horn; but by shortening or lengthening the slide he can put his instrument into any key he wishes for the moment, so that he gets all the semitones of the scale, though in a rather roundabout way.

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played by one man, and have been so introduced in some modern compositions. Other percussion instruments are the side-drums, small cylindrical drums which are rattled on with a couple of sticks;[1] the bass drum, an instrument of torture which is pounded on at one end with a heavy drum-stick; the triangle, and the cymbals. The two first are rather for a military band, and are never used in the highest class of orchestral music; the triangle, introduced with judgment, may occasionally produce a pretty and poetic effect; the cymbals give a fine wild colouring to what Professor Huxley would call "corybantic" music, when properly swung and clashed in the two hands; generally (for economy) one of them is fixed on the bass drum, and the man who plays it plays the cymbals also, by clapping the other one down with one hand while he beats the drum with the other; in which case they are about as effective as if two bedroom candlesticks were knocked together.

A few general hints may be offered as to what to look for in the use of these various classes of instruments; the subject in detail is nearly inexhaustible. The stringed instruments, which possess by far the greatest ease of movement in all directions, take the more rapid and brilliant passages where the full band is used in a quick movement. In such passages the wind instruments are commonly used to play sustained harmonies while the strings give the movement and outline of the composition, as in Ex. 41; or the same kind of division of labour may be seen in a slightly different manner in Ex. 34, where the wind instruments play a sustained melody while the violins accompany it with their buoyant, undulating passages in triplets. In modern music the wood wind instruments (the "wood band," as sometimes called for brevity) are frequently used as playing in answer to or in alternation with the string band. In the two remarkable chords before noted, at the beginning and end of the *Allegretto* of Beet-

[1] I do not know why, but it is a common mistake to suppose that these are the "kettledrums."

Ex. 42.



To face page 99.

hoven's Seventh Symphony (Ex. 32 and 38), the effect depends to a great extent on the hearing of the chord with the peculiar *timbre* of the wind instruments as opposed to the totally different tone of the strings, so that when merely played on the pianoforte the intended effect is lost. The horns are sometimes used, as in that very instance, to fill up the harmony of the "wood wind"; they and the trumpets are more frequently employed in filling up the general harmony, but are sometimes introduced (the horns especially) with characteristic passages of their own. The kettledrums play mostly the part of aiding the total effect, but Beethoven discovered the art of using them with great effect in special phrases of their own. The trombones are grouped separately from the other brass instruments, on account of their different capabilities, as already mentioned; they also are mostly introduced to fill up the harmony and aid the body of sound in full band passages. Two short quotations from scores will serve to show how the instruments are arranged on the page of the composition, and also to illustrate some of their functions. Ex. 42 is from the first movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony; Ex. 43, for a larger band, from the *finale* of his Fifth.

In Ex. 42 the manner in which the various instruments may be grouped and contrasted is illustrated. The principal melody, instead of being played continuously by one set of instruments, is divided in alternate bars between different instruments; at A A it is given by first violins with the clarionets an octave below them; at B B by oboes, second violins, and bassoons in three different octaves, giving great breadth of effect; the flutes and oboes alternate in a little accompaniment phrase; the horns sustain the inner notes of the harmony; the trumpets contribute a characteristic trumpet-like phrase of their own; the drums keep up a long roll; each instrument contributes its own detail according to its own special capabilities. The key being D minor, two of the horns are in D and two in B flat, in order to supply the B

flat to the scale; in this passage the B flat horns are silent, as their notes cannot be advantageously made use of. It should be noted that while the trumpet and horn parts are always written in the key of C, their real notes depending on the key in which the instrument is made, the drum notes are usually written as they sound; the reason is that the drums are not confined to any special set of tones, but may be tuned any way, hence it is more convenient to write the actual notes to which they are tuned. The wide spacing and large intervals given to the basses and violoncellos in the above quotation should be noticed; a constant characteristic of Beethoven's treatment of this part of the score. The trumpets, though higher instruments than the horns, are usually now written on the stave below them; this is to keep the trumpets near to the drums, as their passages often range together; while the horns, on the other hand, are thus kept next to the wood band, with which they frequently play. This quotation, short as it is, may serve to give the uninitiated reader some idea of the amount of carefully elaborated detail which goes into an instrumental score of Beethoven's; the passage quoted occupies two-thirds of a page of Schott's octavo edition of the Symphony, of which the whole movement, all showing the same careful elaboration of detail, fills eighty-three pages. Ex. 43 shows a passage of fuller and louder character for a larger band; piccolo, double bassoon,[1] and trombones being added; the latter, as a special class of instruments, are bracketed together between the drums and the strings, serving thus to divide up a large score into groups and make it easier to read. Here the upper wind instruments help to give brilliancy to the principal melody played by the violins;

[1] The names of the instruments are here given in English (for "oboe" and "violoncello" are now practically English words); in practice they are usually written in Italian; the words are nearly the same except in two cases; bassoons and double-bassoons are "fagotti" and "contra-fagotti," and kettledrums are "tympani."

Ex. 43.



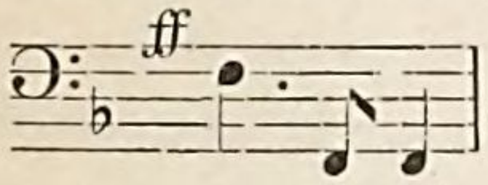
To face page 100.

the clarionets, bassoons, and trombones sustain the harmony; the double bassoon reinforces the bass; the trumpets and horns keep up a *fanfare* passage on C, that note being a continuous one in the harmony of the first four bars; the drums play with them, and mark the emphatic points at A with a thundering roll. The widely spaced intervals of the horns and trumpets at B to B are very effective in filling in and binding together the whole body of tone; it being remembered that, though written the same, the horns really sound an octave lower than the trumpets, so that these groups of notes are spread over an extent of two and a half octaves.

It may be useful to mention one or two special points as to the use and character of separate instruments. With the stringed instruments a special effect is produced by sounding the strings with the fingers instead of with the bow, called *pizzicato;* an instance of this occurs in Ex. 38, where the whole passage for the strings is marked to be played *pizzicato*, and as softly as possible; this short low muttering of the passages produces a most weird effect, giving a shadowy mysterious character to these closing bars of the movement. The *pizzicato* of the basses alone is a very fine effect, producing a heavy deep pulsation; it is constantly used in passages of accompaniment. The flute (to ascend from the bottom to the top of the score) is the high light of the orchestral picture, often used to double a passage in the octave above; more useful in combinations than as a solo instrument, though occasionally a beautiful effect may be produced, as in the *Scherzo* of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, by giving to the liquid notes of the flute a subject which has been previously given out with all the vigour and energy of the string force; and a remarkable instance of its use in suggestive colouring is in the flute passage which leads from the Storm movement of the Pastoral Symphony to the "Song of Thankfulness" at the close; it seems actually like a break of the clouds showing the blue sky through. The

oboe is an instrument whose thin plaintive tone is peculiarly suited to the delivery of tender and pathetic melodies, for which it is largely in request; it may also have great effect in giving special colouring, as in Mendelssohn's use of one long hard note from it in *Elijah*, at the passage "The earth is as iron under me." The clarionet is *par excellence* the wind instrument for noble and broad melodies, while it is capable also of great tenderness of expression; and a larger number of beautiful melodies have been written for it than for any other wind instrument. The bassoon is an instrument very effective in the orchestra in various ways; in slow passages it has considerable power of expression, and is often used to strengthen a melody by playing with the violoncellos, or playing an octave below the violins (a very good effect); or sometimes we find a melody written in three octaves, for flutes, clarionets, and bassoons together. But it has also considerable power of grotesque expression, especially in quick passages, or in slow passages where its notes are forced, as in the whimsical passage from the *Scherzo* of the Pastoral Symphony, quoted in footnote, page 19; and every one who has heard the *Sorcerer* will remember the exquisitely comic effect produced in the accompaniment to Mr. Wellington Wells's song, at the words "for a nativity," where the bassoon repeats the singer's phrase an octave lower. The trombone is an instrument much misused by many modern composers, for the making of mere noise; it is really capable of grand effect in slow harmonies, especially in passages of somewhat subdued tone. No one understood its use better than Mozart, who was very sparing with it, introducing it just where it would produce its characteristic effect, as in the accompaniments to the sentences of the Statue in *Don Giovanni*, or in the first movement of the *Requiem*, where the trombones are introduced for a single bar just before the entry of the voices, and then immediately silenced. The kettledrums used in former days to be employed merely to add to the volume of sound, but Beethoven has made the

most remarkable and unexpected use of them in solo passages on various occasions, as at the close of the slow movement of his Fourth Symphony, where they play alone the first phrase of the movement, originally heard from the strings; and in the *Scherzo* of the Ninth Symphony, where the drums are tuned in octaves, and are repeatedly heard alone in the phrase



, which forms the prominent feature of that extraordinary movement.

The consideration of the characteristics of the various instruments serves to remind us that there is another and very subtle element in musical form, viz. that which consists in the relation between the character of the music and the quality and capabilities of the instrument employed. The perception of this relation is a source of very refined enjoyment in listening to music, a kind of enjoyment which is only acquired by long habitude and a pretty good general acquaintance with the mechanical principle and expressive powers of the principal musical instruments. It is only after such a degree of experience that the listener gains the added pleasure of perceiving how peculiarly well conceived such and such a passage is for the instrument for which it is written; that it is essentially a violin passage, essentially a pianoforte passage, &c., &c., as the case may be. Upon this kind of perception, indeed, the full enjoyment of certain classes of instrumental music almost depends. Take, for instance, one of the most refined and purely intellectual types of instrumental music which has been invented—the string quartett. This is not to be thoroughly enjoyed except by hearers who have learned to understand the character of passage which essentially belongs to a bow instrument, and who are alive to the fact that this is not to be regarded like the combined notes struck together in a pianoforte composition, but as music produced by the simultaneous process of four independent voices; it is the pure four-part writing of the old vocal school, but with an elaboration

and intricacy of detail and power of modulation which the vocal quartett cannot compass. It is, perhaps, the most intellectually perceived form of instrumental music, since it has no adventitious aids from variation of tone-colouring; it is a matter of pure tone-design in its most severe and logical form; one which requires the power of a master to handle it adequately, and which, above all other forms of music, demands pure and perfect execution. Other forms of chamber music may give pleasure enough if played with true expression, even if something be wanting in execution; in the *trio* for piano and strings, the piano frequently, among amateurs, "covereth a multitude of sins"; but with the string quartett nothing short of absolute accuracy can be accepted.[1] The Concerto, again, is a form of music the enjoyment of which depends partly on a knowledge of the capabilities and genius of the instrument, as well as on a perception of the special object kept in view. A Concerto, though written in the same form as a Sonata as far as broad lines of composition go, is in regard to detail almost a separate form in itself. It is a composition written to illustrate and bring out the peculiar characteristics of the instrument and the greatest powers of the executant, in passages of the greatest difficulty and brilliancy, which are relieved, as it were, against the band as a background, and in the intervals of which the band takes up the story

[1] It is to be regretted that in the present day the quartetts of the three great masters of this class of music, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven (Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Schubert lag far in the rear here!) are hardly ever heard in public under the conditions for which they were written. The Monday Popular Concerts, which, by bringing quartett music into large concert halls, have enabled it to be given at low prices, have been an immense educational boon; thousands of people thereby know this music who would not otherwise have known it; but the public are under an illusion if they think they are hearing such music with the effect intended by the composer. The quartetts were written as "chamber music"; the whole scale and effect of the music is falsified when played in a large hall. Let any frequenter of Monday Popular Concerts hear the same quartetts in a drawing-room, and he will perceive that in the large hall he has been having only the shadow or reflection of the music rather than the thing itself.

so as to give a rest to the solo player, or the solo instrument is treated for the moment as one instrument of the orchestra, and made to play its part in combination with the orchestral instruments. Hence a much broader and more massive style of writing is employed than in a solo Sonata; passages have to be regarded in their broad relation, rather than in reference to melodious expression or prettiness of detail; and hence there is no kind of composition which is more puzzling to the musically uncultivated listener. I can remember my own bewilderment and disappointment when, as a boy, first hearing one of Beethoven's Concertos; having been accustomed to strum, in some sort of way, his Sonatas, where I found distinctly marked melodies and clear connecting passages, I could not comprehend what appeared to me this aimless excursionizing up and down the key-board. For the same reason, no doubt, I have heard the remark from a man who really liked listening to classical music in the shape of Sonatas or Symphonies, that he could not care for Beethoven's Violin Concerto—a thing which to a musician is one inspiration from first to last. The speaker was not destitute of musical feeling, but he had not grasped the *form*. The highest beauty of a Concerto, however, is not to my mind to be found in the violin Concerto, where the tones of the solo instrument are too much allied to those of the band, but in the pianoforte Concerto, where the tone and the whole *genre* of the solo instrument are so completely in contrast with everything in the orchestra, and its bright showers of notes glitter against the heavier tones of the band, like a fountain playing against a background of dark foliage. There is perhaps no musical pleasure more subtle and refined than that afforded by a fine pianoforte Concerto.

There is one way of regarding the meaning and function of instrumental music which has exercised too much influence on modern music to be passed without notice here, though it is not in fact directly connected with musical form or design: I refer to the modern tendency to what is called "programme

music," or music intended to express a definite idea or phenomenon which could be otherwise described in words. This tendency is in reality adverse to musical form, for, if pushed to its logical conclusion, it would result in this, that the form is of secondary consequence provided the music expresses what it is intended to express. The idea is, regarded from the highest æsthetic standpoint, essentially a fallacious one, since the very object of music is to express something which cannot be expressed in any other way; and, in fact, the best music of this class is that which is the furthest removed from anything like imitative effort, and might be enjoyed purely for its own sake without a thought of the arbitrary meaning tacked on to it. Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony, which is by far the most remarkable piece of programme music in existence—and, in fact, has been the principal influence in giving popularity to this kind of music—illustrates at once both the strength and the weakness of this form of the art. The first and second movements are so beautiful in themselves that probably no one who heard them without knowing their expressed intention would wish for any explanation; though the first movement, which would perhaps seem to such a listener rather discursive and vague, no doubt gains a new meaning and even beauty when we consider it as intended to picture the sense of enjoyment in the beauty and movement of a landscape, with the breezes coming and going over it. But in the Storm movement Beethoven does not escape pitfalls, more especially where, in order to picture the roar of the storm, he allows the basses and violoncellos to play in groups of four notes against five,



, so that none of the notes

are heard precisely together. This most distinctly is *not*

"music"; it is a gross æsthetic falsity, and it is a thousand pities that Beethoven should have lent the sanction of his great name to such a procedure. The subject of what is called "poetic basis" in music is referred to further in Chapters V. and VII.; it may be observed here, however, that even at its best this is a far less intellectual form of instrumental music than that which is purely abstract, inasmuch as the arbitrary connection of a concrete idea with certain sounds only involves an exceedingly simple mental process of comparison, and makes little demand on the feeling and imagination of the hearer. Hence it is that Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony is the most popular of his Symphonies with the general public; it presents them with a definite and simple idea which they have no difficulty in grasping, while the far nobler and more recondite poetry of the Seventh Symphony, its successor next in order, is comparatively speaking out of their reach.[1]

This tendency to employ music in what may be called the punning imitation of concrete ideas or phenomena appears to me, so far from extending the domain of music, to be one of the many indications that the art has nearly run its course, and is now in its decadence. It has reached the point which every great artistic development—Greek sculpture, Gothic architecture, Renaissance painting, alike—reaches sooner or later; when the healthful and spontaneous evolution of its powers has reached the climax, when its natural growth has ceased, when its professors begin to grow introspective in

[1] It is a proof of the inherent weakness of the "programme music" theory, that in general no one fits the intended idea to it without prompting, and the same thing will suggest the most different ideas to different people. I put this to a practical test once by playing Schumann's little piece from the "Forest Scenes," called "The Wayside Inn," to a party of about thirty people, asking them to say what idea it suggested to any of them; but none of my audience came anywhere near the idea labelled on it by the composer, though they were helped so far as to be told that it was an incident in an excursion through a forest.

regard to their principles, to write criticisms on their own and others' methods, to divert the art to other than its primary and simple aims, if haply by that means they may galvanize it into a show of life again. It is a melancholy spectacle, this decaying period of a great art; but at least music has left us a noble legacy—a possession for ever, one may hope—in the wonderful collection of works which for nearly two centuries have been poured out for us by the great masters of music; not to speak of the earlier and more tentative efforts which, like the paintings of saints in early Italian art, though less imbued with life and passion, shine with a mild and grave lustre of their own. True, as we have seen, the system of sounds out of which these works have been composed has been somewhat arbitrarily made—is partly founded on physics and partly on mere selection; but it has answered its purpose wonderfully, all things considered. True, also, that the literary method whereby compositions are written down, and presented to the eye and preserved for the memory, is also an illogically developed one, open no doubt to much criticism in detail; but this also has nevertheless served its purpose admirably. It has become to many a recognized and beloved and familiar language, and it has the immense advantage (entirely overlooked by would-be reformers of notation) that it presents to a certain extent a kind of pictorial representation to the eye of the relations of the sounds which it symbolizes. It may be that a much more perfect system of music could be evolved on a more scientific basis; but that cannot be done now. The present form of the art has impressed itself too deeply on the mind and associations of the civilized world. In some future age, after a new return of "dark ages" (if that be now possible) has quenched the lights of the old civilizations, it may be that some future people may evolve, perhaps on the basis of the harmonic series, a new form of music, strictly scientific in its physical system, and opening the way to effects

and combinations such as we have never yet heard. But it may be reasonably doubted whether such a physically perfect system could become, in its artistic results and expression, more precious to mankind than that which has been to this epoch such a treasure-house of abstract and idealized beauty.

CHAPTER II.

HANDEL.

In the days when the *Spectator*, with the last reflections of "C." or "L.," flanked the chocolate on the breakfast-table; when ladies spotted their faces and surrounded themselves with a circumvallation of hoops; when silk-stockinged and high-heeled gentlemen went about (as the nun in *St. Clement's Eve* would have said) "with rapiers at their sides like leopards, prancing up and down the walks," and when Sir Plume would emphasize his "'fore Gad" with a rap on his snuff-box, and was conscious of the nice conduct of his cane—in those days there was well known in London a large, tall, heavy man, with clumsy hands and feet, sauntering about with an awkward "rocking motion," talking English in the most grotesquely uncouth of German accents and with the sublimest contempt for grammar and construction, and swearing heartily, "a good mouth-filling oath," at any one or anything that did not please him. This was Mr. Handel,[1] for some time the popular opera composer of the day, and musical director of the old theatre in the Haymarket, where he was the terror of refractory singers; whose lot it was to be to achieve, when force of circumstances drove him from

[1] Recently the German spelling of his name, Haendel or Händel, has been revived, but it did not obtain during his lifetime in this country; he was then "Mr. Handel" or "Mr. Hendel," the latter spelling being probably an attempt to represent the German pronunciation of his name.

the operatic stage to try how far oratorio would keep things going, a fame far greater than he could have attained by any of the operas which had set the town in a ferment, and to have his memory honoured and consecrated as the great musical exponent of the religious faith and feeling of the English nation.

Seldom has there been a more striking instance of the strange fortune, whereby so often it seems to have been ordained that the greatest and most valued productions of imaginative genius in art and literature should owe their existence almost to the accident of circumstance, with in many cases hardly even the consciousness on the part of their producer of what he was doing for the world. For all that appears (and we have a pretty good body of facts to go upon), Handel, who is known to every one as our great oratorio writer, would have done hardly anything of what now constitutes his title to fame, would have nearly disappeared from view by this time, remembered only as the author of operas popular in their day but long since *passés*, and endeared to musicians by some beautiful harpsichord pieces, had he not been driven by the cabals of some singing women and *castrati* to try a form of music in which he could dispense with their vocal gymnastics and stand independent of their "most sweet voices." In early life he had written two Italian oratorios, and a Passion oratorio to German words, and when on a visit to Hanover in 1717 he wrote a second work on this subject, probably for some performance to be given at the time; but these are still nearly unknown to the English public. His first English oratorio, *Esther*, was composed during an early period of his English life (1720), but only for private performance at the Duke of Chandos's palace at Cannons, in order, as has been suggested, to give the lord of the "dean and silver bell" a taste of a sort of music then unknown in England; and when the work was first produced in public twelve years later, it was against the composer's wish and by means of a surreptitiously

obtained copy. It was only from 1740, when Handel, at the age of fifty-five, still strong and resolute, but disgusted by his long and in the end unprosperous struggle with the singers and their fashionable auditors, shook off the dust of his feet against them and "turned to the Gentiles," that he began to lay the real foundation of his fame; not, like the poet whose genius is often likened to his, "long choosing and beginning late," but driven reluctantly from the scene of his former triumphs, and pathetically consoling himself by the reflection that "sacred music was best suited to a man descending into the vale of years." And now, after a century of honour and worship in the country of his adoption, the present all-criticizing age has begun to apply the scalpel to his genius, to dissect his plagiarisms, to count his mannerisms and weaknesses of detail, and to question even his right to the honours long and (let it be at once admitted) somewhat blindly paid to him. This reaction has received an additional impulse from the fact that Bach, his great contemporary, has lately been called from exile and raised among us to the throne which was always his due. Musical London has never yet been large-minded enough to worship two idols at a time; and the puzzlement becomes naturally all the greater when the two composers in question are so diverse in the nature of their genius and the manner in which they employed it. What is the real nature and extent of Handel's power as a musician and a musical poet, and how far the past and present estimate of his genius has been right or wrong, it is the business of these few pages to suggest.

It is not to the purpose, nor would space permit, to go here into the circumstances of Handel's life in detail. The main facts about him, and many characteristic and more or less credible anecdotes, have been long familiar and easily accessible, and of late years have been, one cannot say popularized, but rendered still more generally accessible, by the work of M. Schœlcher, a French enthusiast, who came over

here and squeezed all the information that he could get out of English libraries into a volume of incoherent paragraphs and rambling reflections, which he called a *Life of Handel*.[1] But a short recapitulation of his earlier career will help us to understand both the man and the circumstances under which his works were produced. During his early German days his figure does not stand out very clearly. Born at Halle (February 23rd, 1685), the late child of a second marriage, when his father was above sixty, the record of his childhood tells us chiefly the old story, so common in the early biography of musicians and artists, of an innate passion for his art early manifested, and sternly repressed by his father, so that the boy had to smuggle a clavecin into his chamber, and muffle the wires in order to carry on his finger exercises unknown to the higher powers. The first great turn of his life resulted, characteristically enough, from his own strength of will at the early age of seven, when, on his father refusing to take him on a journey to the ducal court of Weissenfels, where an elder son of the family had a post, the child followed the carriage on foot till he was taken up and admitted as one of the party, and on their arrival was duly introduced to his half-brother at the court, where he soon got the run of the harpsichords, and one day was set on the organ-seat after chapel, and so attracted the ducal ear by his manner of playing, that father and son were summoned to the presence, and the former had to listen to a lecture *in camerâ*, on the duty of developing his son's genius. The opinion of a duke on such a subject could not be overlooked, and the boy was placed under the tuition of Zachau, organist of the Marien-Kirche at Halle, a good musician, and an idle, drinking man, who seems to have grounded the boy well, however, and took advantage of his talents to leave him in command of the church organ as often as the master wanted

[1] One or two other Lives have appeared since, but nothing at all adequate to the great interest of the subject, both in a musical and "social history" point of view.

a holiday—by no means the worst thing he could have done for his pupil. Handel's next stage was Berlin, where he seems to have played the part of a boy prodigy (though never subjected to such a course of public exhibition as little Mozart was made to go through), and where he met Bononcini, then already a favourite opera composer, who was afterwards to be his rival in the good graces of the London public, but who now stood on his dignity, and kept the boy at a distance. Shortly after his return from Berlin, Handel lost his father, on which event he betook himself to Hamburg, the best centre for opera after Berlin. The opera was then under the direction of Reinard Keiser,[1] a composer of note in his day, and a stirring and active man, who seems to have gone through the same sort of fight with the public that Handel afterwards went through in London, though he extricated himself when in low water in a way that never occurred to Handel, viz. by marrying a woman with money. Among Handel's friends here were Telemann[2] and Mattheson,[3] the latter a talented young musician, and afterwards a

[1] Keiser, who is now little more than a name, wrote one hundred and eighteen operas, his last, *Circe*, being said to be his most beautiful. Burney calls him "the father of German melody." He lived 1673–1735.

[2] Telemann (1681—*circa* 1767) was another enormously voluminous composer, chiefly in the line of Church music. It is a curious example of the different light in which men appear to their own and succeeding generations, that he was offered the Cantorship of Leipzig before it was offered to Bach, the latter only obtaining it as a *pis aller* on Telemann's declining it. Handel said of Telemann that he could write a motett in eight parts "as fast as another man could write a letter," a notable technical feat at a time when it was considered *de rigueur* that part-writing should be pure and harmonious. Now it would be nothing, because he might have flung the notes together anyhow, provided he had only said that all the discords and crudities had a "poetic basis."

[3] Johann Mattheson (1681–1764) must have been a man of unusual versatility, for he not only made a name as an opera composer and singer, but subsequently became secretary to the English Resident at Hamburg, and showed so much business ability that he succeeded to the post at the death of his principal, keeping up his musical studies and writings all the time. A pleasant trait of his youthful friendship with Handel (besides his trying to stab him) was that, as Handel excelled on the organ and Mattheson on the

considerable writer on music, to whom we owe a characteristic story of which there are various readings, but of which the admitted facts are, that Handel provoked the jealousy of some one by insisting on taking the first harpsichord in the orchestra and not the second, and that some one nearly cut his thread of life with a rapier in consequence as he was leaving the theatre. Mattheson says it was himself, and he ought to have known; the point of the anecdote lies in the evidence it gives of that determined will that others should bend to him, that he should be "first fiddle," which characterized Handel throughout his life. Another trait noticed by Mattheson is that it was part of Handel's humour, when first engaged at the Hamburg orchestra, to affect stupidity, and that "he pretended ignorance in a manner peculiar to himself, by which he made the gravest people laugh, without laughing himself." This, if true, may be added to some other points of resemblance between Handel and Rossini. Nothing delighted the latter more than to mystify people by a studiously acted simplicity. Both musicians have left a number of repartees and dry sarcasms behind them; both loved "a jest with a sad brow."

Handel produced at Hamburg (January, 1705) his first opera, *Almira*, a work in which the German and Italian languages were mixed, as the English and Italian were mixed in early operatic performances in this country; the Italian being introduced mostly in the show airs, to accommodate the Italian singers, who were now beginning to carry everything before them.[1] Thus commenced the absurdity by which, subsequently, in the great London operatic estab-

harpsichord, they made an agreement not to intrude on each other's province in public playing, and kept it for five or six years. Possibly this was instituted as a salutary measure, *after* the affair of the rapier.

[1] This is mentioned in regard to Valentini, one of the first Italian singers on the English stage, of whom Cibber, quoted by Hawkins (*History of Music*), says that, though with feeble voice and moderate execution, "he supplied those defects so well by his action, that his hearers bore with the absurdity of his singing the part of Turnus in *Camilla* all in Italian, while every other character was sung and recited in English."

lishments, operas essentially French or essentially German in character were to be deprived of one-half their character by translation into Italian words, at the mere bidding of custom, though sometimes there is hardly an Italian singer on the stage. It is noticeable that in *Almira* the music written to the German words is for the most part much the best and most serious. The opera had a fair success, but the real opening of fame came to Handel when, with the means collected by this and some other operas, he went to Italy about 1706–7. Here we have glimpses, through the veil of imperfect and half traditional narrative, of a blaze of triumph; of gatherings in palace halls where "il caro Sassone" was the admired of all admirers; of Alessandro Scarlatti, then at the height of his fame, following Handel about to hear him play the organ in a style which must have been new enough to Italian ears; of excited throngs at the Venice opera house (which had been long closed), where the new opera of *Agrippina* ran for nearly a month, and of a great singer of the day who not only poured her whole soul into his music, but would have been only too happy to throw herself into the arms of the Saxon Apollo. The latter, however, gave no hint of affording this stage Daphne the least excuse for a metamorphosis. Handel's attitude towards the sex, it may here be observed, seems to have been throughout his life one of indifference, although he excited no little interest in women. With perhaps a constitutional lack of tenderness, he seems always to have found too much to do to be in any want of domestic affection. Once, in his later London days, he might have made what society would have called a brilliant marriage, and was not disinclined, but the stipulation was that he should give up his calling as a musician. This was not to be thought of, and the match came to nothing. If he lost the happiness of domestic affection, he appears on the other hand to have kept clear of any feminine entanglements of a less reputable nature. At all events, his name is connected with no story of intrigue or

scandal in the society of the day; as to his female singers, with whom as an *impresario* he was in very close relations, he had obviously far too much contempt for them to make mistresses of them.

To return: the composer's next change was to Hanover (1709), where he was most generously received by the then Capell-meister, the Abbé Steffani, who, like Mattheson, was a musician of more than musical ability, who had risen to high employment in diplomatic service as well as in the Church, and who partly for this reason wished to shake off the responsibilities of his musical appointment, and nominated Handel as his successor. Sir John Hawkins, the "unclubable," gives us the words in which Handel himself, years after, described his reception by Steffani:—

> "'I was acquainted with the merits of Steffani, and he had heard of me. I understood somewhat of music, and'—putting forth both his broad hands and extending his fingers—'could play pretty well on the organ; he received me with great kindness, and took an early opportunity to introduce me to the Princess Sophia and the Elector's son, giving them to understand that I was what he was pleased to call a *virtuoso* in music; he obliged me with instructions for my conduct and behaviour during my residence at Hanover; and being called from the city to attend to matters of public concern, he left me in possession of that favour and patronage which he himself had enjoyed for a series of years.'"

Hanover, however, proved only the stepping-stone to England. The close political connection of the two countries seems to have put it in the composer's head to visit England, and though the Elector, through the representations of Baron Killmannseck, had just arranged a pension of 1,500 crowns a year for Handel, on the latter mentioning his desire to visit England, he was generously told that he might have a year's absence without prejudice to the pension. Making a detour to see his mother and his drunken old preceptor Zachau, he started *viâ* Holland for London in 1710.

The house in which Handel's operatic triumphs commenced, and of which he was eventually for many years manager, was the old Haymarket Theatre, built in 1706 from the

designs of Vanbrugh: a water-colour drawing of its absurdly heavy little façade is to be found among the late Mr. Crace's splendid collection of views of Old London, now engulfed in the recesses of the British Museum. The first pieces performed in it were some Pastorals (one can imagine of what a conventional cut) consisting of recitations with airs intermixed, which were eminently unsuccessful. The Drury Lane management took the hint, however, for an attempt at the production of real Italian opera, and produced the *Camilla* of Bononcini (who had not then come to England) with great pecuniary success. This again put the Haymarket on its mettle, and a new lessee, an adventurer named Heidegger, reputed as the ugliest man of his day in London,[1] took the house in 1709, and mounted successfully the opera of *Thomyris*, English words and Italian music selected from Bononcini, Scarlatti, Steffani, and others. This was followed by other productions on the same scrap system, the words of some of the airs, as aforesaid, being sung in Italian when the nationality of the vocalist demanded it, the others being supposed to be translated from the original Italian *libretti*; but the only aim of the so-called translations was to get the right number of syllables for the music. The utter inanity of these can hardly be exaggerated. "Those eyes are made so killing," immortalized in the *Rape of the Lock*, is but a mediocre specimen. *Ex. gr.* from *Love's Triumph*, a pastoral which succeeded *Thomyris*:—

No more trial,
Nor denial,
Be more kind
And tell your mind;
So tost,
So crost,
I'm sad,
I'm mad,
No more then hide your good nature,
Thou dear creature.

Baulk no longer
Love nor hunger,
Both grow stronger
When they're younger;
But pall,
And fall
At last,
If long we fast.

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[1] "Something between a Heidegger and owl."—*Pope.*

Of the English singers of the time, Hawkins, who lived near enough to have had trustworthy traditions, says, "It is easy to discover that their perfections were confined to perhaps a beautiful person, graceful and easy action, and a fine voice, the gift of nature, and that owed little of its fascinating power to the improvements of art." It is necessary to bear in mind what an absurd *mélange* the opera in England was before Handel's arrival, to do justice to the real advance which he inaugurated, and at the same time to understand some of the reasons why opera in his hands was still decried and satirized by the leading writers of the day. Opera had got a bad name; and to Swift and Addison, who knew little or nothing about music, Handel was only one opera-maker the more. What he did, however, was not only to import a finer and more dignified style of music into opera, but to substitute for the *pot-pourri* of songs in various languages and from various composers, compositions which, with whatever defects arising from the fashions of the day and the demand for displays of vocalization, were at any rate complete and consistent in their construction: the style, the words, and the whole of the singers employed, being alike Italian.

At the time of Handel's arrival in England there was associated with Heidegger, at the Haymarket, Aaron Hill the poet; he who is so indulgently dismissed in the *Dunciad*—

> "And mounts far off among the swans of Thames."

He wrote the book for an opera on the subject of *Rinaldo*, extracted in the first instance from Tasso's poem, Hill's English being done into Italian for the stage by a hack named Rossi. Handel set to work with his wonted vigour (which reminds one continually of Goethe's remark to Mendelssohn about Schiller being able to "produce" two great dramas annually) and "produced" the opera in a fortnight, and with what splendour it was mounted those who know their *Spectator* will remember. It was an immense success, and brought

at least great fame to its composer; and Walsh, the publisher, made fifteen hundred pounds by the publication of the music, which drew from the composer the observation, "Next time, Mr. Walsh, you shall compose the opera and I will publish it." The opposition to Handel in many quarters began from the first, however; and Hawkins mentions one special reason for his being coolly treated by the *Spectator*, for it seems that Dick Steele had an interest in one of the London theatres, and had also a concert-room let to three musical undertakers, who found their success imperilled by that of Handel; this trio solicited patronage for a concert to be given in their rooms in opposition to Handel, and "were abetted and patronized by the *Spectator*, Nos. 158 and 178, both written by Steele." It must be charitably remembered that it was probably of considerable importance to Dick to get his rent paid.

Handel returned to Hanover after a year, but in 1712 was back again in London, having perceived that here was the field of success for him; and when, shortly after, the English Queen died, and his former master, as George I., came over here "for our goods," Handel had some little difficulty in setting himself right with the King, after having taken French leave of the Elector; the story of his means of reconciliation, by composing some pleasant pieces for a wind band (the *Water Music*) which were played at a Thames *fête* in which Royalty was implicated, is well known. From this time he belongs to England, socially; whether musically or not will be considered presently. He seems to have lived always in good society, and in fact was a man of far too proud and self-respecting spirit to have accepted the dependent position so often accepted by musicians at that period, as the mere makers of music for the wealthy. Pressed by the Earl of Burlington in the first instance to take up his abode with him, Handel lived there for three years, apparently on the footing of an honoured guest, doing just as he liked, studying in the mornings and arranging concerts for the evenings, and

meeting Pope and Gay and Arbuthnot at dinner. At this time he was very fond of playing on St. Paul's Cathedral organ, often keeping a large congregation long after service to hear him; and this was not infrequently followed by an adjournment to a large room in the Queen's Arms tavern in St. Paul's Churchyard, where there was a harpsichord, and the evening was finished in music and conversation. From Burlington House, Handel was tempted to go to Cannons, the new Duke having, as Hawkins drily puts it, gone to so much expense in his palace that it could hardly suit him to have any less a person than the greatest musician in the kingdom for his chapel-master.[1] His residence here is chiefly worth notice because he formed there his English oratorio style, partly in the composition of *Esther*, and partly in the set of anthems which he wrote for the Duke's chapel, in which he discarded both the old Church style of the school of Palestrina (adopted by the earlier English Church composers, Byrd, Gibbons, and others) and the lighter anthem style initiated by Purcell and Blow, and peculiar to the English cathedral service; introducing into his anthems choruses much longer and more elaborated than are to be found in the Purcell school of anthem, and more effective and melodious, as he maintained, than the intricately woven harmonies of Palestrina and his imitators.

This was an interregnum of repose in the composer's life, from which he was recalled by the formation of a company, or "academy," as it was then called, for the performance of operas at the Haymarket Theatre, and Handel was engaged both as composer, and in some sort as *entrepreneur*; and from this time his life was a pretty continual fight. He set off first on a tour to engage singers, bringing back with him

[1] The expression "chapel-master" has been long since dropped; but as in the early days of music in Italy and Germany all the important musical posts were those concerned with the conduct of the Church service, the word gradually came to be applied in a general sense to the holder of a court or private musical appointment, even where Church music was an entirely secondary affair.

Signora Durastanti, and Senesino the male soprano, who was to become a popular idol, and a thorn in the side of the composer. In the first instance the directors of the scheme engaged, along with Handel, for the production of operas, Bononcini, and three years after, Attilio Ariosti, who had, like Bononcini, been a popular musician at Berlin, when young Handel, as a boy, first went there. Attilio was an amiable nonentity, and soon got squeezed into nothing between Handel and Bononcini; but Bononcini was a man of considerable power, whose music was popular in England before Handel was known here, and who, when personally summoned to London to add glory to the new opera scheme, had a large party, among the nobility especially, who wanted to put him over the head of Handel; and the affair became, as we know through an oft-quoted epigram, a battle royal for the town, "'twixt Tweedledum and Tweedledee"; politics even entering into the matter, as Handel had the favour of the Royal Family, which was sufficient to recommend Bononcini to the Marlborough faction: Tories were for Handel, Whigs for Bononcini. The rivalry received a partial check by the production of the opera of *Mucius Scævola*, of which the first act was written (it is believed) by Attilio, the second by Bononcini, and the third by Handel, who carried off the palm by general admission. Bononcini got into some discredit afterwards about a matter in which he was proved to have passed off as his own, through some incomprehensible freak, a composition by a composer not his superior, and he left England under a cloud. As far as one can judge by his accessible compositions, it seems clear that he never had any real claim to be put forward as a rival to Handel; but many of his airs are very graceful and pleasing, and it must be remembered that Handel's real and greatest power as a chorus writer was then hardly known, even to himself, so that the contest may have reasonably seemed much less disproportioned at that time than it does to us now.

But the Italian singing machines who had been brought

over now began to take a part in popular favour, far more important than could be beneficial either to music or to the position of the composer. The hooped and patched occupants of the boxes became so enamoured of the "linked sweetness long drawn out," with which the new school of singers ornamented their solos, that they began to care for nothing but these flourishes, which were inserted in nearly the same style and manner in every opera, and the audience went to hear Senesino and Cuzzoni, and not the composer, just as people now go to hear Patti, and not the opera. Handel had a contempt for these people (though he wrote for their voices) which he took no trouble to conceal; he threatened to throw Cuzzoni out of the window one day when she took exception to a song; and when Senesino had the impertinence to send back one of Handel's most exquisite airs ("Verdi prati") as too unadorned in style, he was answered by the irate composer appearing at his house in person—"You tog! Don't I know petter as yourself vat is pest for you to sing?" Neither of the singers probably deserved a grain more respect than they got, and their cabals with the fashionable Midases were preparing the way for a reaction. It is noticeable that the popular mind shared Handel's contempt for these people already. Ambrose Phillips's lines on Cuzzoni's departure are an amusing outbreak of John-Bullism; addressing her as—

> "Empty warbler, breathing lyre,
> Wanton gale of fond desire;
> . . . .
> Leave us as we ought to be,
> Leave the Britons rough and free."

A somewhat similar parting salute had been previously given to Nicolini, the first of the brilliant Italian executants who had come to England,—

> "Begone, our nation's pleasure and reproach,
> Britain no more with idle trills debauch;

Back to thy own unmanly Venice sail,
Where luxury and loose desires prevail,
There thy emasculating voice employ,
And raise the triumphs of the wanton boy," &c.

The existence of this feeling is significant in regard to the future success of Handel's oratorios, since it shows that outside the fashionable ring of the day there was a public ready to sympathize with strong and manly music, and believing in something better than the roulades and flourishes of artificial *soprani*.

The turn of the tide came for Handel when he engaged, in 1726, a Venetian singer, Signora Faustina, afterwards the wife of Hasse the composer, a lady the equal of Cuzzoni as an artist, and apparently superior to her in character and social position, and proportionately hated by her. The feud between the two was taken up by the titled fools of the town as violently as the previous more important one of Handel and Bononcini ; and eventually Cuzzoni left England because Faustina was offered higher pay than herself by Handel. This raised all the Cuzzoni party against Handel, who about the same time took umbrage (probably with ample reason) against Senesino, and refused to have him in his theatre or write for him. This was cutting his own throat from a pecuniary point of view, but Handel never let that stand between him and his pride. The result was an attempt of the fashionable party to set up an opera of their own, which with Senesino and Cuzzoni, and the much more important aid of Farinelli[1] (who was then in England), they should have made a success, as Handel had no singers to equal

[1] This great singer deserved a better popular epitaph with posterity than the "one God, one Farinelli," the momentary exclamation of a silly admirer, which has been tacked to his name. He was not only admitted to be the greatest executant vocalist of his day, but was a sound and learned musician and a man of worthy character, though no doubt his importance was absurdly exaggerated by the fashionable clique. He who had not heard Farinelli sing and Foster preach ("modest Foster"), it was said, "was not fit for genteel society."

theirs. But it may be presumed that Handel still retained a large number of admirers, and as the town could not support two operas, things went on so badly that Farinelli soon returned to Italy in disgust. Handel, having got hold of Carestini during an *impresario* tour, and having come to the end of his engagement with Heidegger, set up an opera of his own, and went on composing, as Scott went on with Waverley Novels, to keep money coming in, but with no success; and the anxiety and worry of this part of his life brought on a partial attack of paralysis, which he only got rid of after a visit to Aix. On his return in November, 1737, he again tried opera-writing, but with no better success; the tide had gone against that form of entertainment; but a concert of miscellaneous music, which was got up at the instance of his friends, was very successful, and included the performance of an organ concerto by Handel, a form of music by which he now discovered that he could always retain and interest an audience. He began now to find that there was still an appreciative public for him, though of a different kind from that to which he formerly appealed, and went so far in the path of popularizing himself as to play at the rooms at Vauxhall and at the Ranelagh Rotunda, at each of which there was an organ, and to write band music for these promenade concerts, as they might be called. But there was something better left for him to do than this. He had not forgotten the success of *Esther*, when it was produced without his leave some years before, and determining to try the same experiment again, made a most fortunate beginning with the setting of Dryden's *Alexander's Feast*, which, in spite of its pomposity, is a poem admirably suggestive for musical composition on a great scale. This, which is one of his finest works, was followed in 1740 by *Saul*, and *Israel in Egypt*, and from this time he was a composer of oratorios, at most of the performances of which he played also an organ-concerto.

The object of this essay is critical, not biographical; but

it is impossible to arrive at the standpoint for criticizing Handel's best-known and greatest works without a glance at his position when he wrote them, and at the strange course by which he arrived at his real power in the evening of his life. A brief allusion only need be made to the remainder of his career, after the attainment of this new starting-point. He continued growing in estimation with his new public, especially after his brilliant visit to Dublin in 1741–2, where *The Messiah* was first performed, and where he was tumultuously *fêted;* but the aristocracy never forgave him for having refused to compose for their doll, Senesino, and succeeded in driving him into temporary bankruptcy in 1744–5, by systematically organizing large festivities in opposition to his concerts. It is disgusting to read Horace Walpole's petty sneers against a man who had invented a form of musical entertainment superior to what Horace and his world were able to understand, and his libels on the singers employed: "a man with one note in his voice and a girl with never a one, and so they sing and make brave hallelujahs, and the good company *encore* the recitative, if it happens to have any cadence like what they call a tune." However, Handel paid off his liabilities (which appears to have been a point of honour with him throughout his life), and went on producing one work after another with wonderful energy till the year when he lost his sight (1752); and even from that last misfortune he roused himself, and would be led to the organ to fill in the accompaniment to his own choruses and to perform his usual concerto, which he now arranged so as to leave the organ and band as nearly as possible independent of each other, he playing long solos, and the band furnishing interludes between them. In 1759 he died at his house,

[1] One of these singers was Beard, the eminent English tenor of the day, who must have been a capable executant from the music Handel made for him (the tenor part in *Samson*, for instance), and who was even more eminent in his character than in his music. For an account of the high estimation in which he was held as a man, see Leigh Hunt's interesting essay on *Marriages from the Stage*.

now No. 25 Brook Street, and was buried, as we all know, in Westminster Abbey.

The character and personality of the man who played so large a part in the social world of our capital during his life, and whose name has been so intimately connected with the religious and musical associations of this country for a whole century, are not difficult to estimate. The idea which Handel gives us, apart from his musical gifts, is that of an exceedingly strong, self-willed, egoistic, yet thoroughly healthy nature; certainly not the pietist which religious devotees of *The Messiah* have imagined him to have been, but thoroughly honest, cheerful, good-tempered in the main, though violent when irritated, and of indomitable pride and independence. The character of a glutton has been recorded against him; but it is probable that, as in the case of Goethe, his large physique and generally rude health made it natural to him to eat much more largely than average men. Among the little touches which seem to bring the man before us, Burney (*Account of the Handel Commemoration*) gives some very good ones: how, when he was pleased with the way the music was going at one of his oratorios, his enormous wig always had a certain nod or vibration; how, at the close of an air, he called out "Chorus!" in a voice which Burney says was "extremely formidable" (it must be remembered that the conductor's *baton* was not in use in England then); how he swore at the concerts at Carlton House, if the ladies-in-waiting talked during the music, and how the Princess would check them, saying, "Hush, hush! Handel is angry;" and, what is a pleasanter story, how he rebuked the Prince and Princess of Wales for being late at a concert, and "keeping all these poor people" (the performers) "so long from their scholars and other concerns." A musician who could talk thus at court in those days must have had a strong personal power about him. His dealings with his recalcitrant singers have already been mentioned; but he was as autocratic with one of his poets, who complained that Handel's music did not

suit the words he had written, but only got for satisfaction, "Den de worts is bat." When setting words from the Bible he usually preferred to make his own selection (though this was not the case in *The Messiah*); and there is evidence in some remarks which are recorded of him in regard to his sacred compositions, that, in spite of the rapid and business-like way in which his oratorios were produced, and the fact that some of the choruses which have been regarded as most intensely expressive of the words were really *rifaccimenti* from his old opera and harpsichord music, others of these were the offspring of very deep feeling in his own mind, and were genuine expressions of religious fervour.[1]

To estimate him aright as a musician is not so easy, for there are a good many false lights to be got rid of. To what school of music, in the first place, does Handel really belong? He has been claimed as being to all intents and purposes an English composer; but this is only true in a very modified sense. By nature his genius was as German as his birth and manners; those who know him only by his great works written in England would be surprised to find in his first Passion oratorio (written at the age of nineteen) precisely the same cut and style with which the performances of Bach's *Passion-Musik* have familiarized English audiences: the short dramatic choruses, the narrative kept up by a separate singer, the serious church-like tone and style of the airs, with the elaborated accompaniment entirely separate in design from the voice part, might almost as well be Bach as Handel, and there is one bass air, *Erschüttere mit Krachen*, which is almost like a suggestion in advance of the thunder and lightning chorus in Bach's *Passion*.[2] But after Handel's visit to Italy

[1] "For the man doth fear God, howsoever it seems not in him, by some large jests he will make."

[2] When Handel wrote his second Passion oratorio, during his visit to Hanover in 1717–18, he arbitrarily re-adopted to a great extent this German style, which he had flung off in England, introducing a chorale also (*Chorale des Kristlichen Kirche*), in the same way as in Bach's oratorios. He made the

he became very much imbued with Italian taste, and this, of course, was further developed when he came to England, by the very fact that his career here commenced with composing for Italian words and Italian singers. His acquired style, therefore, was Italian, and not English; and this is manifest enough, if it be compared with such a genuine English style as that of Purcell's anthems, in which the musical phrases really seem to arise out of the character and accent of the English language. It is this, no doubt, which drew from Dr. Burney the acute remark that "in the action, passion, and expression of English words, the music of Purcell is sometimes, to my feelings, as superior to Handel's as an original poem to a translation." But when Purcell intentionally attempted the Italian style in some sonatas, "principally to bring the seriousness and gravity of that sort of music into vogue and reputation among our countrymen," his efforts resulted in works very much resembling in style Handel's concertos and overtures. And as far as instrumental music was concerned this style was larger and more dignified than anything that had been introduced into England before. When Handel commenced writing anthems for the Church service at Cannons, then he did strike out a style different from anything that had gone before, and which (as far as choruses were concerned) was the foundation of his later oratorio style; and this style may be said to be cosmopolitan, and combines some of the best qualities of several more purely national styles. If compared with Bach's choruses, it will be observed that the study of Italian vocalization had given Handel a power of writing naturally for the voice which renders his choruses far more vocal, more "singable," than most of Bach's, while his German genius and education gave him power over that logical combination and simultaneous

overture to it, however, from the materials afterwards used in one of his instrumental concertos (*Concerti Grossi*), in a different style. It is worth notice that a copy of this latter *Passion* was found among Bach's MSS., partly in his own handwriting.

treatment of melodies which has received the dry technical name of "counterpoint," but is, in fact, the source of, or at least a condition of, the highest and noblest musical expression. His style was, therefore, a union of the German and Italian elements of musical style, tinctured with a certain English colouring from the influence of the language; but those who think Handel was an essentially English musician because they find the same style in some English anthem writers, such as Greene, Boyce, and Crotch, are putting the cart before the horse: these latter men made every effort to imitate and emulate Handel, after whom no other style was possible in the country for generations. Had Purcell come a little later, and lived long enough to impress his splendid genius on the art, we might have had an English style of vocal music growing out of the essential spirit of the English language; but Purcell was crushed under the subsequent success of Handel. It was rather a mistake, however, of Handel to think that he had so thoroughly beaten the older English vocal writers in his anthems; or for Burney to say that he should like to hear Handel's choruses without instrumental accompaniments, so as to show how superior they were to those of the old church school, when compared on equal terms. It would take a very strong chorus of Handel's (or any one's) to beat such a thing as Orlando Gibbons's "Hosanna," written more than a century before; only, if you had given Gibbons a dozen different sets of words, he would have expressed them all in music of the same manner and feeling, whereas Handel would have given the appropriate feeling and dramatic expression to each. In this respect, though none of his choruses reach the stupendous constructive power of Bach's greatest efforts in choral writing, he is more of a poet than Bach, and has a much wider range of expression; and in regard to songs for single voices there is no place for comparison between the two. Handel was, in fact, almost as distinctly a "melodist" as Rossini, only in a much higher and nobler vein; and even after subtracting all

the careless and uninteresting songs which he threw in merely to give this or that singer something to do (and they are a formidable number), there still remains a long list of perfectly beautiful and vocal melodies, such as haunt our ears after we have heard them, and which no change of fashion or style can superannuate. Only to name a few that recur to the memory at the moment: "Love in her eyes sits playing" is as exquisite a tenor air to modern ears as to the generation for whom it was written—more so indeed, for have we not had a Sims Reeves to sing it to us? So, again, with that still greater tenor air, "Waft her, angels," as remarkable for its seraphic expression as for its exquisitely vocal character. The great soprano song, so seldom heard now, "Farewell, ye limpid springs," with its second movement in which the hymn-like character of the voice part, contrasted with the unbroken, undulating movement of the accompaniment, gives such an expression of calm celestial happiness—that is surely as new as the day it was written. "Rejoice greatly" and "Let the bright seraphim" are still two of the most brilliant and effective of bravura soprano airs (the singers before the public who can do full justice to them may be counted on the fingers—perhaps of one hand); and among others which no lapse of time or change of taste can well impair are: "I know that my Redeemer liveth," "What though I trace," "Angels, ever bright and fair," "Return, O God of Hosts," and many others. The only songs of the period that can in any way be compared with these are some of Purcell's, who, however, with something of the same intensity of feeling, had not the same sustained elevation of musical style nor the same knowledge of vocalization. These can be sung in the present day without any claim on the audience of indulgence for antiquated style of feeling: those of Bach, interesting as many of them are, cannot; they are the work of a composer who, great as he was, had no adequate vocal training and no true feeling for vocal style and expression.

In instrumental music Handel's ground is much lower:

his overtures, with two or three brilliant exceptions, are rather deficient in marked character; his harpsichord suites are very unequal, though containing some great things—notably the magnificent Fugue in E minor, with its subject starting with those three persistent repeated notes, like three blows of a hammer—



and his organ concertos are quite deficient, for the most part, in the true organ style, then even less understood in England than it is now. Most of these concertos, in fact, were put together from pieces originally written for band or harpsichord, and their main object was to afford entertainment to a promenade audience. The first concerto of the first set, in G, is, I believe, the only one which was originally written for the organ: and this contains, intermixed with the usual rather *rococo* style of solo passages, some writing of a higher and more serious character, and much more decisively in the organ style, especially in the passage of imitation frequently introduced in the first *Allegro*—



and the whole of the *Andante* movement which concludes the concerto is very beautiful and original, with a marked

character of its own, free from any of those rather puerile "solos," as they appear to modern taste, which recur again and again in the other organ concertos. It is difficult to understand why Handel introduced these *rococo* solo passages, unless it were to tickle the popular ear, for judging from Hawkins's description of his way of preluding on the organ, before his concertos, "with a movement on the diapasons which stole on the ear in slow and solemn progression, the harmony close wrought, and as full as could possibly be expressed," it should seem that he knew very well what to do with an organ when he chose to please his own taste. It may be observed, too, that he had that love of performing on his favourite instruments, and pride in his execution on them, which has been the invariable accompaniment of all healthy musical genius; every great musician has been a fine performer; and one for whom performance has no excitement, and no interest, may probably be regarded as but a sham genius.

One strange feature in Handel's compositions must be alluded to: the extent to which he has in some cases appropriated to his own use, and embodied in his own compositions, not only ideas, but passages of considerable length, sometimes a whole chorus, from other composers. This matter has been dragged into rather undue prominence of late by some able critics, who seem so pleased with their acuteness in making new discoveries of the kind that they cannot flourish them about sufficiently, and even appear to acquire a kind of morbid faculty for seeing plagiarisms. One writer on music has classed as plagiarisms the chorus, "And with His stripes," in *The Messiah*, on account of the identity of the first phrase with that of a fugue of Bach's—this phrase being, in fact, a kind of common property used over and over again by fugue writers (Mozart uses it in the first chorus of the *Requiem*); the chorus, "Wretched lovers," in *Acis*, as another Bach plagiarism, apparently on account of an obviously accidental resemblance to a passage in one of the *Wohltemperirte Klavier*

preludes; and the beautiful and poetic song, "O Sleep," from *Semele*, as a plagiarism from Purcell, who did, in fact, write a song (in *The Indian Queen*) "To Sleep," but there all the resemblance ends. As to the unquestioned and unquestionable cases, if it were found that the things which have made Handel's fame were borrowed from other composers, the matter would be serious; but it is not so. The gold is all his own; it is the alloy only that he borrows; either by taking a movement of an older composer and incorporating it in his work, or, more frequently, by taking a phrase or a theme and treating it in his own way. A very considerable proportion, as regards quantity, of *Israel in Egypt* is thus made up of excerpts or suggestions from other composers; but when we come to consider quality rather than quantity, the entirely original choruses tower immeasurably above all the wholly or partially borrowed ones, and constitute the true greatness of the work. The Dettingen *Te Deum* is another characteristic example. This, which is mostly a rather inferior work written to order and *currente calamo*, is largely borrowed from a Latin *Te Deum* by an otherwise nearly unknown composer, forty years previous to Handel, named Urio, whose *Te Deum* has been reprinted in consequence of this discovery. The inferior and less interesting parts of Handel's work are identical with most of Urio's; the final chorus, which is beautiful, is purely Handel's; and the one point in the work in which Handel reaches his highest manner—the chorus "To Thee, Cherubim and Seraphim"—commences, indeed, with a flourish of trumpets inserted from Urio (and even this is improved by a slight but most important alteration in the opening phrase), and then the chorus proceeds with a grandeur of manner and expression of which there is not a hint to be found in the older work. This is a fair specimen of the real relation of Handel to the composers he made use of. The facts which have been brought to light have not the slightest bearing upon our estimate of the greatness of his genius, which rests entirely on works of

unquestionable authenticity: it is, in this respect, a mere question of more or less quantity of matter. In other respects it is a great puzzle, no doubt. It is difficult to understand why he should ever have done this at all, since he had not only unlimited ideas of his own to draw upon, but was one of the most rapid of workers—*The Messiah*, which is nearly all original matter, having been completed in little over a fortnight—so that even the demand for copy in a hurry need hardly have driven him to this; and it seems, at first sight, still more difficult to understand how a man who in all other records of his life exhibits an almost defiant integrity of character should have thus appropriated the ideas of other composers without acknowledgment. The explanation is probably to be found partly in the very different state of music in his time; for when contrapuntal science was so much valued, it was considered (not only in Handel's day, but for long afterwards) that to take a "subject" from the works of another musician, and elaborate an extempore fugue upon it, was a compliment to the original author of the subject; and Handel might not unreasonably have thought that there was no difference in principle between doing this extempore on the key-board and doing it on paper. But the fuller and truer explanation is probably to be found in Handel's tremendous egotism and belief in himself, which led him to regard himself as the centre of the music of his day, and to consider many of the previous inchoate attempts at musical expression as serving the best possible purpose in being bent to his ends. If it is his royal will and pleasure to be original—why, so: if not, if he have already composed the principal portions of a great musical epic, and the filling up of the intermediate spaces be irksome to him, why then, whatever comes within arm's length—scraps of his own old operas, concertos or organ or harpsichord fugues, tags from this man's *Magnificat* and that man's *Serenata*—shall all be swept pell-mell into the melting-pot, to come out a complete whole, stamped with his image and superscription. For this high-handed

proceeding, so far as regarded the works of others, his defence would probably have been in spirit the same which Mr. Froude has recorded on behalf of Reinecke Fuchs, in that matter of Lampe the Hare—"Such fellows were made to be eaten." And, strange as it may seem, the result has in one sense justified this reasoning; for it is certain that not one of the things from which Handel has borrowed would be of much interest to any one now, except for the mere fact that he has made use of them.

In speaking of Handel's music from the artistic standpoint, we can only here spare a few words in regard to the class of now neglected compositions by which he was during a great portion of his life chiefly known. In a general way, it may be said that a great many of the *bravura* solos of his operas have only naturally shared the fate of most music that is written merely for show; the style of execution changes, and what delighted the public of one day would only weary the public of two or three generations after.[1] Besides this, what we gather here and there as to the effect produced by some of the show airs in their own day, would lead to the conclusion that in the character of voice produced by the abominable system, now fortunately obsolete, of manipulating the human instrument, there was a kind of power and intensity in the execution of brilliant vocal ornaments which no natural female soprano can reproduce. We may gather this from one significant expression of Burney's, who, in mentioning one of Handel's *bravura* airs, says that his readers can imagine what it was like when "thundered forth" by the great voice of Senesino; and this expression, which no one would ever use in regard to the most powerful female soprano voice, gives some idea of what effect may have been produced by a voice with the compass and flexibility of a woman's, and the physical power and resonance

[1] In regard to some of Handel's *bravura* passages in the operas, moreover, it may be questioned whether there is any singer at the present moment who could execute them.

of a man's. There are, however, other things in Handel's operas besides the show airs. Some of the finest songs from them are well known in our concert rooms, but there are many quite as fine which are completely unknown ; and they have this additional interest, that many of them are in a style quite distinct from those of Handel's oratorio airs, and show the composer in a new and different light from that in which we are accustomed to consider him. *Rodelinda* is one which is particularly fine and varied in its solos ; and *Rinaldo* is unquestionably in its way a great work, full of beauty in its vocal music, and very effective in many of its dramatic situations. The choruses in these operas, as in the majority of more modern operas, are superficial in style, and brief and unimportant in form. But the airs have so much in them of true genius, that, in spite of the incongruity which would be forced upon us of seeing heroic and martial parts acted and sung by women in men's costume (which would be the only means of representing the music), it might really be worth while to attempt the revival of one or two of Handel's operas, not only for the sake of the really fine music, but for the interest of enabling London, under Queen Victoria, to form some idea what kind of thing it was that London, under Queen Anne and George I., fought and struggled for places to hear.

And now, what of the oratorios? Have we, as some persons would tell us now, been all this time ignorantly worshipping an inferior composer who has gained a factitious renown ? As to the æsthetic value of the form of composition called an oratorio, it is hardly necessary to discuss that. When it was first introduced, there was a good deal of argument as to whether or not an oratorio should be performed with action ; but every one understands pretty well now that it stands on a different basis from opera ; that it is a musical illustration, not of the actions of the persons of a narrative, but of their feelings at successive stages of the relation, alternating with choral utterances which may either represent the feelings of other personages connected with the

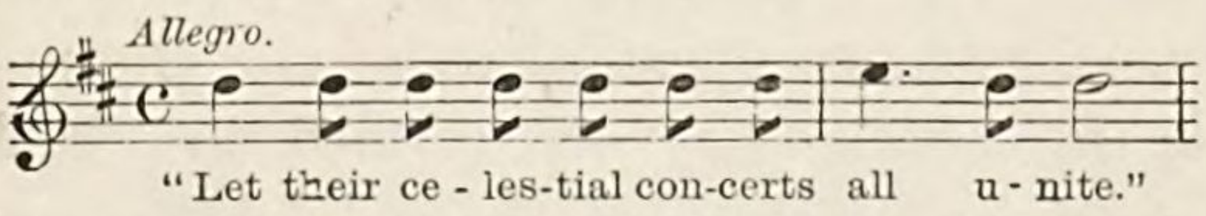
main plot, as in the chorus "Welcome, mighty King!" in *Saul*, which is the song of the populace, or may be an impersonal and abstract comment suggested by the narrative, as in the chorus denouncing "Envy," in the same oratorio; in this latter case, it plays, of course, exactly the part of the chorus in Greek drama. This is, therefore, a perfectly consistent form of musical art, in some respects superior to lyrical drama, as appealing more purely to the feeling and imagination of the listener, and having the immense advantage of getting rid of the pasteboard and tinsel that are inseparable from stage representation.

In estimating the absolute value of Handel's grand series of works of this class, every impartial critic must at once admit that there is a large discount to be made in regard to the solo parts, for what is now *passé* and uninteresting, and a certain proportion (but much less) for the choruses, in consideration of the evidently hasty way in which some of them are written, the amount of working up of old materials, and the repetition of some forms of effect and accompaniment which get very threadbare when used so often as Handel uses them. But, on the other hand, it must be remembered that these works were written literally *to get a living;* that Handel, without a rival worth speaking of in this country, and amid a community then very ignorant of music, might very pardonably have felt that whatever he chose to write was at least better than any one else at the time could give them; and also, that he probably by no means foresaw the importance which posterity would attach to these works. Almost precisely the same thing might be said of Shakespeare, very few of whose plays can be given now without the excision of a good deal that is antiquated and uninteresting, and who also probably wrote with little sense of the greatness of his work. Both were involved in the struggles of life—both wrote for the moment, and were great, where they were great, without self-consciousness or affectation.

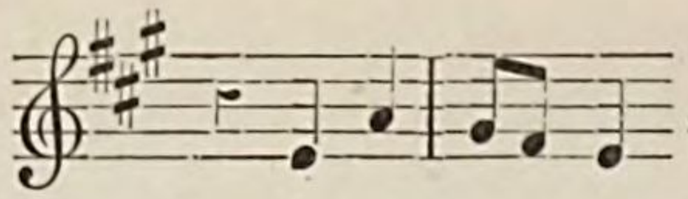
So much for what Handel came short in; but what did he

accomplish? In considering first his most popular work, which has taken such a hold on the public mind in this country, it is, of course, difficult to separate entirely the question of its musical excellence from that of its religious interest, and it is perhaps hardly possible for any who have not been, at any rate, through the stage of religious creed of which it is the expression, to understand quite fully the effect which *The Messiah* has had. Making all due allowance for this adventitious interest, a dispassionate criticism must conclude that the popular judgment on the work is not in the main very far wrong. Taking the subject of the oratorio on its own ground, regarding it as the musical expression of that older evangelical creed which has been such a great power with the mass of the English people in the latter part of last and the early part of this century—that creed which believes the plan of salvation to be set forth in the prophets, and fulfilled in Christ, it would be difficult to imagine how it could be put into a more impressive and pathetic form than in many parts of this oratorio. The opening recitative, "Comfort ye My people," is unsurpassable in beauty and appropriateness, as representing the first dawn of hope and promise to a people walking in darkness: and the first chorus, though less distinctive and original in style, is remarkable for its clearness and force of expression, in the bright and jubilant opening phrase, and in the solemn effect of the Gregorian-like *canto fermo* for the basses which announces that "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."[1] The sub-

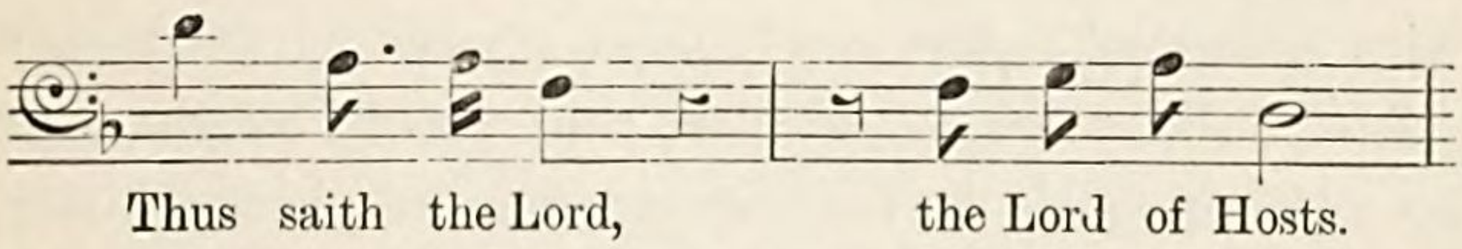
[1] This phrase, consisting of a recitation on one note with the exception of a rise of a tone on an emphasized penultimate note, is, in fact, identical with the first strain of the second Gregorian tone, and was used by Handel in other cases as a means of emphatic expression in a broad and ample style: see, for instance, the last chorus in *Samson*—



This rise of a tone on the emphatic syllable may be said, indeed, to represent one of the primary elements of expression in vocal music.

sidiary phrase  , which most attracts the popular ear, is old material worked up (it occurs in the closing chorus of the Dettingen *Te Deum*); it cannot be said to have any specially expressive meaning, though it affords a good foil to the *canto fermo*. There is less of this refurbishing in *The Messiah* (quickly as it was produced) than in most of the other oratorios; but it leaves its mark nevertheless on the work, and forms an instructive contrast with the portions entirely written for the occasion, and in which the feeling of the music really arose out of the feeling of the words. In the choruses "And He shall purify" and "For unto us" (both of which are cooked up from old themes having no reference to sacred music), the long "divisions" on the last syllable of "purify" and on the word "born" are mere pieces of *rococo*, and must be felt to be so by all who listen with judgment unbiased by habit or religious feeling; the passages have gained a factitious dignity, from association with the ideas attached to them, which is not inherent in the music itself. "He shall purify" is indeed a most effective vocal fugue, which one always hears with delight, but there is no religious expression in it unless what is projected into it by the listener. In "For unto us" the separate enunciation of the words "Wonderful, Counsellor," &c., in a great shout for the chorus *fortissimo*, is one of those straightforward strokes of Handel's which always tell with the crowd, because they represent a method of musical expression which every one can understand and appreciate, without special education or insight. In this sense it is very effective, and always "brings down the house"; and it was a great idea to express the separately emphasized words in the Biblical text by these separate ejaculations of the chorus; but the harmonies in which they are clothed are bald enough, and the effect is certainly not helped by the commonplace figure-passage for the violins which fills up the pauses of

the chorus.[1] But turn from these two perfunctory choruses, worked up from old themes, to the airs which respectively precede them, and which are written for the occasion and for the full expression of the words, and what a difference do we find. At the very opening of the bass recitative, with its grand declamatory phrase—



we feel the attention arrested by a musical setting which really and dramatically expresses the meaning of the words: the long division on the word "desire" is academical, no doubt, though one almost pardons it for its energetic close; but the whole of the rest of this recitative is one of the most remarkable examples in music of dramatic declamation in which every phrase seems to spring from and to embody the meaning of the words, and which seems fulfilled with prophetic fervour. As to the air which follows, is it possible to say too much in admiration of it?—of the solemnity and pathos of the first movement, and the fire and energy of the quick movement, with its surprising turns of modulation; the *bravura* character of the music being fully justified by the suggestion of the words.[2] There is no padding, no *rococo*, here; this, and the other air referred to, "The people that walked" (the more popular but not the greater composition), show us Handel, not as the maker-up of "a fine entertainment," as the compiler of the words primly called *The*

[1] To my mind the finest bit of this whole movement is the instrumental symphony which closes it; a beautiful bit of symmetrical writing for the strings, brightened at the close by that golden note for the trumpet, which sings out the fifth of the scale above the heads of the violins.

[2] I leave on one side the controversy as to whether this air was originally intended to be sung by a bass or a contralto; merely remarking that it is incomparably finer and more impressive when sung by a bass voice; an opinion which seems, indeed, to be now practically accepted.

Messiah, but as the musical poet throwing his whole soul into the expression of his subject. For the most part Handel has in *The Messiah* been peculiarly fortunate in his solos; there is no other oratorio by him which includes so many solos in his best and finest style, so few that are old-fashioned or academical. Even the two which are now usually omitted —"Thou art gone up" and "If God be for us"—are very fine airs, only just below his best style, and superior to "The trumpet shall sound," which is too closely connected with the plan of the work to be omitted, but in which Handel has not risen to the subject, having been unfortunately turned aside by the desire to produce an effective *obbligato* for the trumpet, the employment of which is a mere kind of musical pun, after all. But in general his imagination seems to have been fired by the fervid language of the Bible, so different from the wretched doggerel verse he was too often condemned to set in his oratorio books; and his knowledge of the powers of the voice, and capability of writing brilliant and telling passages of vocal display, comes in admirably in such songs as "Rejoice greatly" and "Why do the nations," where the ideas suggested by the words are such as seem to find their natural expression in passages of brilliant vocal execution.[1] We ought not to overlook, either, the remarkable degree of characteristic effect which Handel produced in the accompaniments to some of these airs, without in any way overweighting or interfering with the singer's part. The design of the accompaniment to "Thou shalt break them," even without Mozart's additional wind parts, is remarkable for picturesque illustrative effect; and the manner in which the tumult of battle is suggested in the accompaniment to "Why do the nations," merely by the characteristic form of the string passages and the occasional peal of the trumpet, is one of

[1] *Bravura*, or display music, for voice or instrument, is not by any means a thing to be despised at the proper time and place, if only for this reason, that it is well to know to what perfection of execution the human voice and hand can be brought, and to keep up the standard of this, since all art, as Mill said, is "an endeavour after perfection of execution."

the finest strokes of genius in the work, and indicates what an orchestral colourist Handel would have been had he been able to wield the resources of the modern orchestra.

Of the airs which depend for their effect purely on melodic form and pathos of expression—"He was despised," "He shall feed His flock," and "I know that my Redeemer liveth"—it is needless to remark how they have gone to the hearts of all listeners, cultured and uncultured alike; though, perhaps, for intensity of pathos they are even surpassed by that recitative "Thy rebuke," and the short air which follows it, the knowledge of the full beauty of which this generation owes to Mr. Sims Reeves, who, in regard to this and some other of Handel's "minor" compositions (as they used to be thought), may almost claim to share laurels with the composer. But, leaving details for a moment, consider the broad poetic feeling with which the two great contrasted phases of the story, the Nativity and the Passion, are treated by the composer. What a pastoral simplicity and *naïveté* in the series of recitatives which follow the Pastoral Symphony, what a bright dawn-like glitter in the opening of the chorus "Glory to God," which, with its harmonies written all for the acuter voices of the chorus, seems really, like the spirit of the carillon in Victor Hugo's lovely little poem, to dance down to us from an opening in the sky—

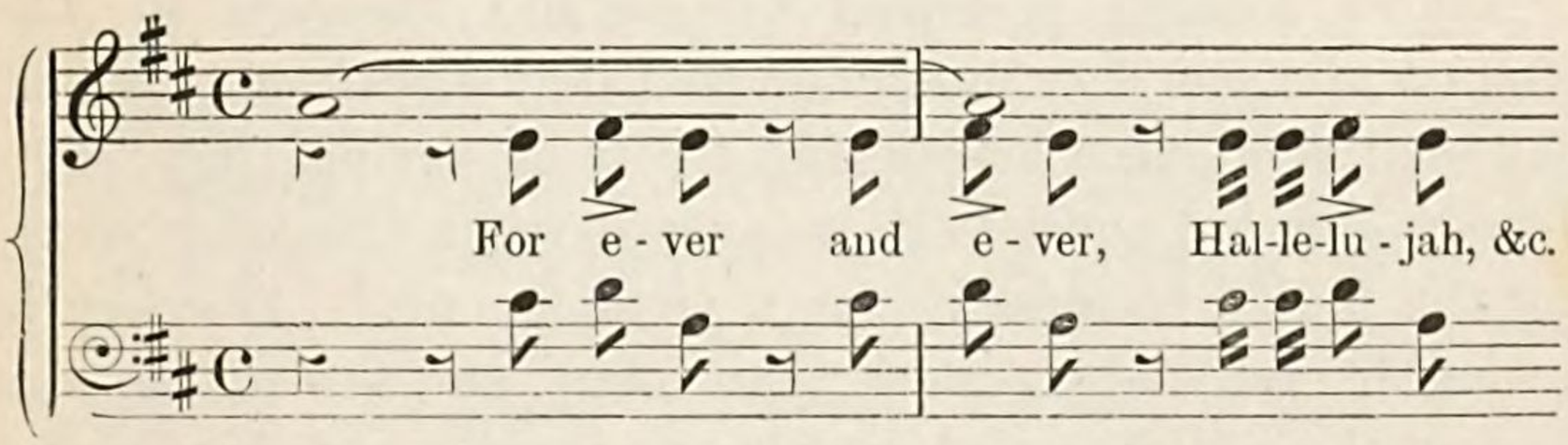
"Apparaître soudain par le trou vif et clair."

In the Passion portion of the oratorio, the significance and beauty of that preface chorus, as it may be called, "Behold the Lamb of God," is too much overlooked, and the true feeling of the movement is often marred by its being taken too fast; it is the prelude to the tragedy, and can hardly be sung in too solemn and expressive a manner. Of the great Passion chorus, or string of choruses, the fugue "And with His stripes" is, no doubt, open to question, or more than question, as being little allied to the true expression of the words. It has been defended on the ground

that Handel treated the sentence as a Church doctrine to be suitably enunciated in a Church form of composition; but this is too far-fetched. The criticism against "All we like sheep," on the same ground of unsuitability of expression, seems to overlook the composer's method here. His intention evidently was to give the most real and dramatic painting of the riot of the stray flock, contrasted with the pathetic idea embodied in the words, "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Taken separately, the quick movement is quite at variance, no doubt, with the idea of a confession of sin; but, taken along with the solemn conclusion, it is a painting of Michaelangelesque breadth and power, in which the sinner and the Saviour are contrasted; and the result justifies the treatment: the moral grandeur of that reversion at the close of the wild chorus has rarely been equalled in music. Another great point in the work is the fierce chorus "He trusted in God," one of Handel's most powerful inspirations, whether considered musically or dramatically; and it is worth while to compare this with the effort of a composer of more ordinary genius in the same kind of situation—with Mendelssohn's "Stone him to death," for instance, in *St. Paul*, a mere series of noisy ejaculations; while Handel has given all the impression of the fury of a mob, within the strictly defined limits of an accompanied vocal fugue: a composition worth playing for its own sake as music, independently of its dramatic meaning and its place in the oratorio—which certainly cannot be said of Mendelssohn's chorus. But the climax of the work, no doubt, is the "Hallelujah," which, after being strummed and scraped in every form, *usque ad nauseam*, as one might suppose, still seems as effective as ever when properly rendered, and is certainly unsurpassed in the whole of choral music as an instance of the attainment of a grand effect by the very simplest means. It came straight from the heart of the composer, which is part of the secret; and surely may still go straight to ours, for if it cannot have the same meaning

to us which it had to him, that is only because we can supply it with a still deeper and broader meaning; and in some of us, at least, the sight of a large audience rising for this chorus, and the opening of the well-known phrases, never fail to raise an emotion which is, no doubt, utterly illogical, but which we would on no account part with.

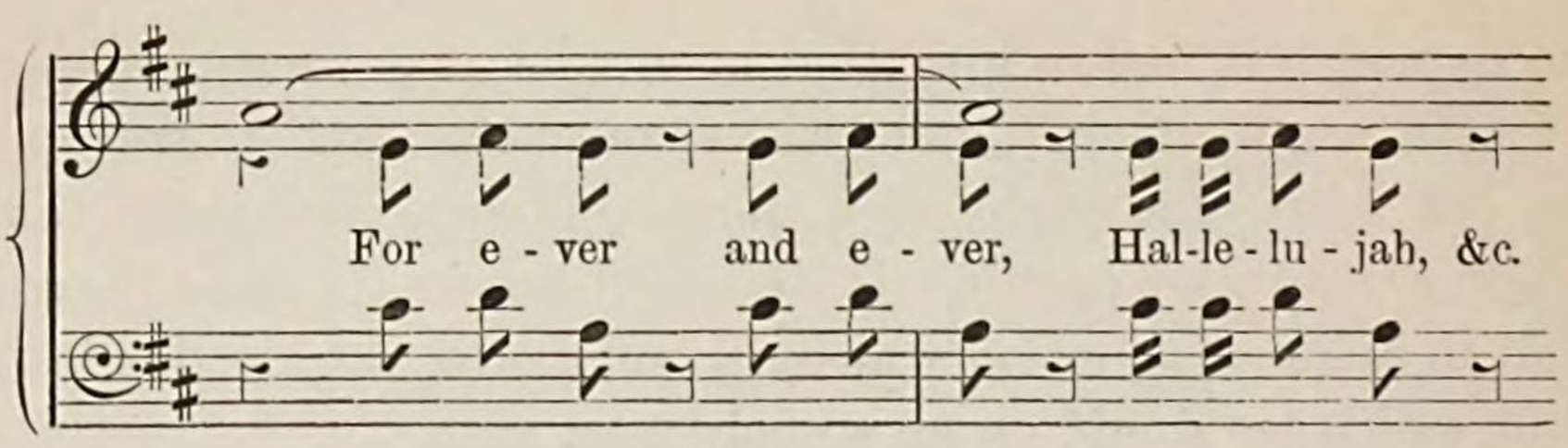
An emotion of another kind, however, is raised by the characteristic inattention or indifference of chorus singers and conductors, whereby the true emphasis and accent of the ejaculations "For ever" and Hallelujah" in this chorus are habitually, indeed (as far as my experience goes) universally, ignored. Handel did not always rightly understand the accent and *ictus* of the English language; but when he did, he usually accommodated the music to it. In setting the phrases referred to, he was careful to bring the musical accent in correspondence with the accent of the words, bringing what would be the accented syllables, in speaking, on the accented parts of the bar in the music—



Yet every chorus invariably sings it with the accent on the first and last notes of the phrases—



producing the impression on the ear of an alteration of the barring, as if it ran thus—



and completely distorting the idea of the time, for the moment. I have heard *The Messiah* scores of times under all kinds of circumstances, but I have never once in my life heard these passages in the "Hallelujah Chorus" sung with the right accent. That chorus singers should make this sort of blunder is not surprising: every one knows that the average chorus singer is a mere machine—

"Qui facit quod non sapit,"

as the old rhyme says;[1] but is there no conductor to be found who can take the trouble to teach a chorus to sing "For ever" and "Hallelujah" with the proper accent? It would be worth while, as a curiosity, to hear it done right for once.

Handel himself preferred *Samson* and *Theodora* to *The Messiah;* he was very much annoyed that *Theodora* attracted but small audiences, accounting for it by saying that "The Jews would not come to it, because it was a Christian story, nor the ladies, because it was a virtuous one." *Theodora* is a smaller and slighter work than many, and few of the airs (except the well-known "Angels, ever bright and fair") have much interest; but there is a peculiar beauty and refinement

[1] I met with an amusing instance of this in the case of a tradesman who was doing some work for me, and finding I was "musical," told me that he also was, and that he was a member of Mr. ——'s chorus, naming one of the best choral bodies of the day. In reply to an inquiry as to what they were then doing, he said they had been practising for some time at a very pretty work, "Service in D," he thought it was called, but he could not tell me the composer. A performance of Beethoven's Mass in D, by the said chorus, not long after, enabled me to guess that it was at this work that this good man had been practising for some time, without knowing, or caring to know, whose music he was singing!

in the choruses, which ought to be much better known than they are. *Samson* the composer certainly estimated rightly; in abstract beauty it rises in parts higher than almost any of his works, though it requires a great deal of weeding for performance. Drawn in great measure from Milton's drama, the words furnished Handel with a subject worthy of his genius; the chorus "O, first created beam," and the air "Total eclipse," in which the hero laments his blindness, are examples of the noblest pathos, admirably contrasted with the brilliant but throughly pagan feast-music of the Philistines. The funeral dirge after the death of Samson is at once religious in its feeling and classic in its calm beauty, rising to grandeur at the point where the full chorus enters at the words, "Glorious hero"; and one of my own most ineffaceable musical recollections is of hearing Madame Viardot Garcia, when in the height of her powers, declaim the beautiful prayer, "Return, O God of Hosts," with a prophetic fervour intensified in its effect by the answering masses of the chorus, in sad and slow-moving phalanx—

"To dust his glory they would tread."

To sum up, without too much detail, some other characteristics special to Handel in his highest productions, one may say, in the first place, that he seems not infrequently to rise to what may be called a moral grandeur not often attained in musical expression. A notable instance of this is that chorus in *Saul* before referred to, "Envy, eldest-born of Hell"; one feels that the very "devil Envy"[1] itself must cower beneath this stern, inexorable, passionless denunciation, which reminds us of Schiller's description of the Greek tragedy chorus—

"Streng und ernst, nach alter Sitte,
. . . . .
Der durch das Herz zerreissend dringt,
Die Bande um den Frevler schlingt."

[1] According to Thersites: "I have said my prayers, and devil, Envy, say Amen."

Other examples might easily be mentioned, though none, perhaps, superior to this. Recalling Wordsworth's complaint against Goethe, that his poetry was "not sufficiently inevitable," we may say, on the other hand, of Handel, that hardly any composer is so "inevitable" as he is when at his best. From the very commencement of one of his great choruses we feel that he has not the slightest doubt or hesitation as to what he intends to do, and the whole develops from beginning to end so naturally that it seems impossible to imagine that it could have been carried out in any other way, or that a single phrase could be altered without impairing the unity of the whole. There is something, again, peculiar to Handel in the largeness of manner, the extended perspective, as one may say, of many of his great choruses; such as the first chorus in *Israel*, where the sighs of the people oppressed with burdens seem to come up from the whole length and breadth of the land, and still more in the chorus towards the close of the work, "The people shall hear," which may be said to be one of the greatest efforts of his genius, and which is in every sense Hebraic in its grandeur; we seem to feel the hush and awe of the surrounding nations while the endless files of the chosen people pass over into the wilderness. And in a totally opposite way should be noticed the power which Handel had of treating less dignified subjects with an almost realistic force and picturesqueness, yet strictly within the limits of pure art; as in the chorus, "He trusted in God," in *The Messiah*, already referred to; the grotesque and yet giant-like humour of Polyphemus's love song, "O, ruddier than the cherry"; the Philistines' song of triumph over Samson, "Great Dagon hath subdued our foe"; and (most remarkable in this way of any) the bacchanalian chorus in *Alexander's Feast*, "Drinking is the soldier's pleasure," where the swinging chant for men's voices has all the abandon of a half-drunken revel, and *yet* it is noble music; a feat of combination of artistic power with realism which only genius of the highest order can achieve. Lastly, run

over but a very few of the examples of Handel's power of seizing the local colour and picturesque suggestions of his subjects. Mendelssohn has been much and justly praised for his depiction of the sentiment of Pagan worship, its cold gracefulness devoid of spirituality, in the chorus of the Priests of Jupiter in *St. Paul;* but Handel has done the same thing to perfection in the chorus, "Cheer her, O Baal," in *Athaliah*, which we never hear; nor is he any less vivid in painting the fiercer aspects of Paganism in the chorus in *Jephtha*, "No more to Ammon's God." He has blown with equal effect the trumpet of warlike patriotism in *Judas*, and the pastoral pipe in *Acis;* he could sing alike the dirge of "The world's avenger" in *Hercules*, and the simple music of the village sports, "With many a youth and many a maid," in *L'Allegro*. And his unerring instinct in seizing on any poetic element that his subject affords cannot be overlooked. Too often the words he had to set were little better than doggerel, and his acquaintance with the English language was too imperfect to enable him to judge of style, or to be aware often how commonplace the words really were. But give him the slightest suggestion upon which a poetic association can be hung, even if it be but a single word, and Handel rises to it infallibly. Let the chorus in *Solomon* sing of "Death and wild despair," and they sing in the wildest and most thrilling harmonies that ever gave voice to the majesty of grief. Let the patriarch in *Joshua* give thanks that it is his lot to end his days in "Mamre's fertile plain," and forthwith Handel is inspired with a religious pastoral which seems to breathe the very spirit of the peaceful, far-off patriarchal life of the Old Testament. Let the chorus in *Theodora*, musing in melancholy strains on the departed saint, express with a sudden turn of sentiment the hope

> "That we the glorious spring may know,
> Whose streams appeared so bright below."

and immediately the music rebounds to the sentiment in a phrase so nobly ecstatic that it seems to raise us on the wings

of hope—so simple, that we might be tempted to think that any one could have written it; but it is the simplicity of inspiration.

And if it be remembered that, after deducting from the works of Handel all that can be said to be antiquated in feeling or careless in style, the few examples above recalled are but a small proportion of what remains that is equally noble and pathetic, surely we may say that the ungainly, irritable, proud, yet in his way genial German, who one hundred and fifty years ago made London his home, left us a legacy not to be lightly esteemed. That he was in the main a high-minded and honour-worthy man the records of his life sufficiently show; that he was a gifted musician has never been questioned. But he was more than all this. In his own special language, and with his own materials of utterance, he was a great poet.

Since the above essay was revised for this present publication, there has appeared the volume of the *National Dictionary of Biography* in which Handel, who has been accepted for the purpose of the *Dictionary* as practically an Englishman, is placed by Mr. Fuller-Maitland and Mr. Barclay Squire, the joint authors of the article, as below the first rank of composers. The reasons given for this are peculiarly characteristic of the tendency of modern musical criticism, which sees everything from the point of view of "progress." They say that, unlike Bach or Haydn, Handel lacked the power by which an artist is impelled to progress beyond his contemporaries, and to point the way to new methods which will preserve his art from stagnation. Every composer of the very first rank has possessed this power; *ergo*, Handel was not a composer of the very first rank, and the authors go on to accuse him of having kept back the progress of music in England by the influence of his works. This is a most singular instance of putting the cart before the horse. That

musical art in England stagnated for a long time after Handel is quite true, but the cause of this is to be looked for in the musical isolation of England from the Continent, which has only in quite recent times been broken through. Germany has been the great land of musical composition, as Italy has been of painting. Handel was the only one of the great Germans who came over and settled here; consequently England became, and remained for long after, Handelian. Had Mozart come over here in like manner, and brought out all his great operas in London, England would, in turn, have become Mozartian. We have never had any native composer of the highest rank since Purcell, nor any resident composer of the highest rank since Handel, consequently English music has stagnated very much. But, so far from that being Handel's fault, there can be little doubt that, for long after, what music there was produced in England that was worth speaking of owed whatever elevation of style it possessed to the influence of Handel.

It is objected that there is not a single development of modern musical form that can be traced to Handel. This is to a great extent true, though an exception should be made in regard to Mendelssohn's oratorios, which, in spite of a certain imitation of Bach's manner in detail, are completely Handelian in general type, and would never have been written but for the existence of Handel's oratorios. But is this really the test of the greatness of a poetic creator? What developments of modern dramatic form can be traced to Shakespeare? Or, if we must keep to music, what development of modern musical form is traceable to Bach? Not the symphony or sonata certainly, or the modern opera, in any shape or way. As Beethoven said of him, he was "the patriarch of harmony," and has a perennial influence as a great teacher in that way, which Handel has not. But to say that certain composers had an influence on the style of their successors, and we will call these the greatest—Handel had not such an influence, therefore he is

not of the greatest—is merely adopting a perfectly arbitrary test of greatness. A test which puts Haydn into a rank above Handel is, *ipso facto*, to be suspected; the evidence of our feelings and perceptions is the other way; and it seems to me that such a view could only be entertained by critics who, while possessing competent knowledge of musical theory and history, were entirely destitute of fancy and imagination. We do not go to Handel as a teacher of construction, certainly, any more than we go to Shakespeare as a teacher of literary style; his greatness lies in his poetic faculty and in his appeal to our feelings. About this there is no reasoning. If Handel has failed to impress this or that critic with his power of poetic conception and passionate utterance in music, I can only say I am sorry for the said critic. It may be worth while, for the sake of those to whom a great name is an authority, to point out how differently Handel impressed Beethoven, the most essentially poetic and impassioned of modern composers. Seyfried, in his *Beethoven Studien*, gives the following opinion as expressed to him by the composer:—

"Handel is the unequalled master of all masters. Go to him, and learn, with small means, how to produce such grand effects."[1]

In a letter from an English visitor in Vienna to a friend in London, given in the appendix to Moscheles' translation of Schindler's *Life of Beethoven*, we read:—

"In the whole course of the table-talk there was nothing so interesting as what he [Beethoven] said about Handel. I sat close by him and heard him assert very distinctly in German, 'Handel is the greatest composer that ever lived.' I cannot describe to you with what pathos, I am inclined to say with what sublimity of language, he spoke of *The Messiah* of this great composer. Every one of us was moved when he said, 'I would uncover my head and kneel down on his tomb.'"

In a letter from an English lady visiting Vienna, who came with an introduction to Beethoven from a friend (given also

[1] "Händel ist der erreichte Meister aller Meister! Geht hin, und lernt, mit wenigen Mitteln, so grosse Wirkungen hervorbringer."

in the appendix to Schindler's *Life*), the writer says that Beethoven observed to her that he "loved Handel," and proceeded for some time speaking in his praise. In Wegeler and Ries's *Notizen*, they record that "Beethoven esteemed Mozart and Handel most of all composers, and next to them Sebastian Bach." I am not aware that there is any record of Beethoven's opinion of Handel in his own writing; but the testimony quoted above, coming as it does from different and independent witnesses, can leave little doubt that these anecdotes represent truthfully his opinion on his great predecessor. That opinion has the more weight when we consider that Beethoven was essentially a progressive artist, that he had a very proud consciousness of his own powers, that he was naturally disposed to be a severe critic on other composers, and was certainly not given to what is called "gushing" in regard to their works or their genius. His judgment may be instructively compared with that of the two English critics who have discovered that Handel was a second-rate composer.

CHAPTER III.

BACH.

THE whole history of Art, taking the word in its widest meaning, affords no spectacle more remarkable, or, it may be added, more instructive from certain points of view, than that presented by the slow but progressive extension of the fame and influence of the works of Bach during the period which has elapsed since their earnest, studious, single-minded author passed away from among living men. Most of the small band of the greatest musical composers passed a portion at least of their lifetime amid the blaze of popular applause, and were crowned with laurels won in the face of an admiring concourse, and amid the heat and tumult of conflict. Bach alone among them presents the unusual phenomenon of a composer of great original genius, and of almost unparalleled mastery over the materials and conditions of his art, passing a quiet domestic life in diligent but unobtrusive study and production; apparently undisturbed by ambition, except the ambition to do as well as possible the work which he set himself to do, and to realize his own artistic ideal; producing with unwearied diligence compositions in which deep and earnest feeling is expressed through tonal construction of the most elaborate technical character; doing great things as a part of his daily business, hardly himself aware of their greatness; composing cantatas which are now of world-wide fame, for the prim

religious "functions" of congregations whose pastors and masters regarded him merely as the church organist, talented but self-willed and rather troublesome—a person to be called to order for his musical liberties in accompanying the psalmody; dying with the reputation, even among the initiated, of an organ-player and contrapuntist of unusual powers, "merely that and nothing more," and passing soon into a temporary obscurity into which his works followed him. It is hardly possible to realize at this moment, when Bach is a name hallowed on all musical tongues, that there was half a century during which, not only in England (which never knew him till recently), but in his Fatherland, his name and his productions had passed nearly out of recognition. But wonderful is the innate vitality of a work of genius. Let no one who has produced a great poem, in whatever medium, despair of its surmounting all obstacles to fame short of the actual destruction of its material embodiment. Let this vehicle of the maker's thought be left intact, and sooner or later the thought will burst from its tomb. As Matthew Arnold says in his noble little poem, "The New Age," when the epoch has ended, and strife is stilled upon the plain, then

> "O'er that wide plain, now wrapt in gloom,
> Where many a splendour finds its tomb,
> Many spent fames and fallen mights,
> The one or two immortal lights
> Rise slowly up into the sky,
> To shine there everlastingly
> Like stars over the bounding hill."

So it has fared with the genius of the man who was once Cantor of the Thomas-Schule at Leipzig, and wrote anthems for the Church service and taught the little boys Latin.[1] Slowly the conviction of his greatness has broadened and deepened, till at the present moment he seems not so much a man as an influence; not a mere musical composer, but

[1] This was a portion of the Cantor's official duty.

a kind of source and fount of musical achievement and inspiration.

The temporary obscuration of his star of course explains to some extent the scarcity of biographical notice of Bach till recently; Forkel's short and dry little book, published in 1802, which ignored the composer's vocal works almost entirely, having been the first attempt at a consecutive Life, and the only one of much importance till the appearance of Dr. Spitta's truly "exhaustive" work, the greater portion of which has now been rendered accessible to general English readers by the translation to which the names of Miss Bell and Mr. Fuller-Maitland are appended. As an example of biography, the book is a success rather in regard to quantity and presumable accuracy than literary quality. Dr. Spitta has aimed at doing what Jahn did in his admirable *Life of Mozart* —at giving an insight into and a critical review of the music and musical life of the period in which the composer lived, and tracing the connection between his art and the circumstances and influences under which it arose. Of course no biography of a great artist is really complete except on some such scheme as this; but Dr. Spitta has not the shaping power which alone can render such a biography in itself a work of literary art and a pleasure to the literary sense. The author gives us a great deal of information which is of interest in regard to early German music and the generation of musicians preceding Bach; but all that is of real value might have been compressed into a shorter space with much advantage to the book and to the reader, and might certainly have been arranged in a far more intelligible and coherent manner. But Dr. Spitta, in the language of an old proverb, "leaves nothing in his inkstand"; he has amassed a great amount of information of a more or less vague character about the organists and Church composers of the ante-Bach period, some of which refers to names of no interest now, and which is immensely spun out; and he can find it in his heart to bestow all his tediousness on the reader

without even lightening the labours of the latter by lucid arrangement of the voluminous materials used. You never know where to have him; every few pages he is off on some fresh scent, and in many cases it requires careful comparison of opposite pages to find out whom he is talking about at any particular moment, and to unravel the intricacies of his (or his translators') personal pronouns. We read a paragraph, for instance, commencing "The appointment to Weimar was an auspicious circumstance," &c.; this is the first intimation to the reader that Bach had received such an appointment; there is a passing remark, a few pages previously, to the effect that he had applied for it, but nothing more. The first hint of the most important change in Bach's official life, his appointment to the cantorship at Leipzig, is dragged in in the same kind of shambling and allusive manner, and then quitted for twenty pages for a criticism on the "*Wohltemperirte Klavier.*" Biographical details and criticism are all jumbled together in almost inextricable confusion, and each chapter seems a labyrinth without either beginning, middle, or end. In short, Dr. Spitta has shown immense diligence and enthusiasm in collecting facts, without any notion how to put them together or recount them in readable form. But there is perhaps another reason why, even under better literary management, a voluminous biography of Bach would not in any case have the interest which a really good biography of others of the great composers could not fail to have. In the first place, we are very poorly supplied with personal traits of the man, and all that Dr. Spitta has given us (which is probably all that will ever be available now) goes but a little way towards enabling us to realize his personality and manner. But it must be admitted, also, that however we may admire Bach's patriarchal domestic life of peaceful industry, and his apparent freedom from the "last infirmity of noble minds," it is, after all, the brilliant struggling life, passed in the great world and in open fight for fame, which furnishes the material of greates

interest for writers and readers of biography. Bach was a great genius, and apparently an eminently lovable man, but the personal traits of him are few, and those few are really not of much interest, except as they concern his art and his views in regard to it. As far as we can judge, he was, apart from his music, a staid, quiet man, with a certain degree of temper (more easily stirred by artistic than by social annoyances), and deficient in humour—a characteristic in which his biographer more than emulates him. Consequently the whole Life has not so much the human and social interest of a biography as the artistic interest of an extended musical criticism, containing much that is valuable and suggestive, but withal prosy, diffuse, and ill-constructed, to an extent that makes the consecutive perusal of it a toil rather than a pleasure.

Bach the musician is therefore of much more interest to us at present than the little we know or can know of Bach the man; but in estimating his artistic position one may not unsuitably give a glance in the first place at what is known of the composer's family history and antecedents, for this also bears to some extent upon his musical position. In almost all cases eminent composers have furnished practical arguments in favour of the theory of heredity: seldom has there been a musician of eminence who could not point to one or more musically gifted persons among his immediate progenitors; but in the case of Bach the hereditary descent of genius is so remarkably exemplified that he seems almost to stand as a typical instance of the truth of the doctrine referred to. A member of a family who were known as more or less "musical" a century and a half before his own musical career (which we may date roughly from 1700) commenced; the father in turn of a large family, nearly all of whom were, in his own words, "born musicians," some of whom obtained considerable eminence in their time, John Sebastian Bach seems to have been the central figure in which all this widely diffused and long-transmitted musical

talent was summed up and brought to a head. The fact that no son at all equal to himself succeeded him, and that the musical ability of the family began slowly to decline after his generation, may perhaps suggest a rider to the theory of heredity, to the effect that a great effort of Nature in this way seems to exhaust, or at least weaken, the brain-vitality of the stock, and the power of transmission. One of Bach's sons, Philip Emanuel (the "English Bach"), was in his time imagined to be his father's equal, and even eclipsed the paternal fame; but *opinionum commenta delet dies.* Friedemann, the eldest son, may have had capacity to come nearer to his father, but the moral stamina seems to have been wanting. As late as 1846 there died A. W. Bach, a good writer for the organ, whose fine Prelude and Fugue in C minor is included in Mr. Best's interesting collection of "Organ Pieces, Ancient and Modern." But no one of the name has in any way approached the greatness of John Sebastian, who stands at the culminating point from which the family genius declines in each direction. The earliest hint of music in the direct line of the great composer is peculiarly interesting and characteristic. Dr. Spitta fixes the first common ancestor of the various branches as living probably about the middle of the fifteenth century, "since in the sixteenth century the main stem had already thrown off vigorous branches in other directions." They were a purely German family sprung from men of the soil, peasants in Thuringia; and the beginning of music in the branch whence Sebastian Bach sprang was, according to his own record, to be traced to Veit Bach, miller at Wechmar, who took his name from the patron saint of the church at Wechmar, thus pointing, as the author observes, "to an intimate connection of some duration with the affairs of the place." Veit, says his descendant, had his greatest pleasure in a small cithara (*Cythringen*), which he took into the mill with him, and played on it while the mill worked. "He must at any rate," comments Sebastian Bach, "have learned time

in that way." This Veit was apparently, for the biographer does not seem quite clear about it, or else does not make his meaning clear, the great-great-grandfather of the composer. His son Hans showed (naturally) a taste for music, and was apprenticed to the town-musician at Gotha, another Bach, to become a *Spielmann*. The master, Caspar Bach, "took Hans to live with him in the court of the old Guildhall, his official residence. The sounds of bustle and business came up from the stalls which occupied the whole of the market-place on the ground-floor, and from the gallery above he and his assistants must have piped out the chorale at certain hours according to long usage." Hans turned out a gay fellow, who played the fiddle at merry-makings. The eldest of his three sons, Johann, seems to have been the first who shadowed forth to some extent the kind of career which his great descendant was destined to follow. He settled at Erfurt, and was organist of the church known as the Prediger-Kirche.

"As town musician and as organist he united in his own person both the branches from which at a subsequent period the music of Germany, in the hands of Sebastian Bach, developed its noblest blossoms—instrumental music, for secular purposes, and religious music. Though he took no direct part, as Cantor, in vocal Church music, even this derived its chief power of becoming what it did under his great descendant from the development of the art of organ-playing. His brothers and most of his children and successors preferred to cultivate only one or the other of these two branches (*i.e.* secular and sacred), until Sebastian once more mastered the whole domain of music, though, indeed, the post he held did not always warrant this combination. Through a long period of calamity" (arising from wars) "Johann Bach was the head of the Bach family of musicians. He lived to see it spread and thrive, and strike deep root beyond Erfurt, in Arnstadt and Eisenach. Henceforth began a constant and busy intercourse between these three towns. Where one prospered he drew others after him, and by intermarriage and other family ties they further confirmed themselves in the feeling of a closely knit and patriarchal community of interests."

It was thus that the connection was established with Eisenach, where Sebastian Bach was subsequently born. One

cannot linger over the genealogical details which are embedded in the literary conglomerate of 180 pages which precedes the actual entrance of the hero on the scene; but matter of interest may be extracted from it. The strong family tendencies of the Bachs are illustrated in the incident, occurring more than once, of one brother in a family marrying the sister of the elder brother's wife; "union is strength" seems to have been a principle practically acted upon, and by which, no doubt, the peculiar family individuality was kept up. The biographer is emphatic in regard to the "native and pithy originality" of the whole Bach family: "hardly one of the illustrious musicians it produced, including Sebastian and his generation, ever visited Italy for the development of his talent, or benefited by the instruction of a foreign master." To this part of the question there are, as we shall have occasion to observe, two sides. But there is no doubt that the locality and circumstances among which the family originated tinged their whole family character for generations. The Thuringian land itself, to which the Bachs clung so tenaciously,

> "exerted an influence over them in many ways. The loneliness of its woods and valleys—which still, even in these overwhelming times of ours, here and there arouses a delightful feeling, as though the motley world had been left outside the mountains that hedge it in—whose charm could keep its hold even on the great soul of Goethe for more than fifty years—that spirit of solitude soared over the country with wider and mightier wings a century earlier. It narrowed the outlook and deepened the sources of inward life, the spring from which music above all, derives its vitality. More particularly it tinged the peculiar religious spirit which speaks to us in the works of Christoph and Sebastian Bach."

As to the truth and insight of this remark there can be no question. The religion of deep reverential feeling, unalloyed by elaborate ritual, breathes through the chorale music of Bach and his school, just as the social life of himself and his family, simple and unpretentious, seems only the continuation in a rather wider sphere of the peasant life and associations

of his ancestors. The art widened and deepened, but the home-loving domestic spirit remained long unchanged, a testimony to the innate force of character of the race. Among all the traits of the family history that are mentioned, however, none seems more interesting than the brief notice of the earliest known musical Bach referred to above; and we can never again hear the organ fugues or choruses of Sebastian Bach the Cantor, with their mighty waves of rocking and rushing sound, without travelling back in imagination to that little rill whence all this flood of music swelled—to that old-world scene of rustic art-culture where Veit Bach played upon his cithara to the accompaniment of the clatter of the village mill in the Thuringian forest.

The composer was immediately descended from the second son of that Hans Bach before alluded to, named Christoph, who was born at the said village of Wechmar in 1613, followed the calling of a musician, in 1642 was member of the guild of musicians in Erfurt, and died at Arnstadt in 1661. His second and third sons were John Christoph and Ambrosius, who were twins, and said to have been so much alike that their own wives could hardly distinguish them apart. With John Christoph we have no concern here, save to mention that several pages of the biography are taken up with an account of a "breach of promise case" in which he was concerned, of no interest and having no bearing on the subject of the biography; but Dr. Spitta never knows when to pass over anything. Ambrosius "settled in Erfurt in 1667" is the first notice we find of him, and then, a number of pages further on, "we left Ambrosius Bach at the time when he entered the Town Council of Erfurt," of which matter nothing had been said when "we left" him; but that is Dr. Spitta's way. It is vaguely indicated that he was a violin-player, and that violin-playing would be what Sebastian Bach would probably have chiefly heard in his father's house; a fact not without its bearing on the musical

culture of the son's genius. In October, 1671, he moved to Eisenach, where Sebastian, his youngest son, was born "in all probability on March 21, 1685." The boy's mother died when he was nine years old, and the father two years afterwards, and Sebastian was transferred to the care of his elder brother, John Christoph, who had previously been sent to Erfurt and appointed organist of the principal church of the town. If Sebastian may have derived his love of and skill upon the violin from his father, under his brother he had opportunities of becoming acquainted with the organ, the instrument with which his name is more particularly associated. The elder brother does not seem to have been of a cordial disposition, however, and Sebastian showed his own strength of character in his determination to study the works of the leading organists of the day, of which his brother had a collection which he kept under lock and key. The bookcase was covered with a wire lattice, and Sebastian succeeded in getting the roll through the meshes of the wire at night, and copying it by moonlight, a feat which occupied six months. This is one of the few incidents on record which throw direct light on Bach's character. It is painful to read that the brother, who seems to have been very unlike the Bachs generally, took the copy away from him when he discovered it. The pretext probably was that the boy ought to be occupying himself with more elementary studies; but the incident is musically valuable, inasmuch as it proves that at a very early period of his life Bach became acquainted with the style and method of the leading organ composers of the day. At fifteen he was fairly crowded out of his brother's house, and thrown upon the world, obtaining a situation as chorister at Lüneberg, in the church of the Benedictine monks of St. Michael. It is somewhat singular to find a musician who was so peculiarly Lutheran commencing his professional career by assisting at a Catholic service. It is a matter of assumption rather than of proof that he soon made himself useful in other ways than singing, and became of some importance to the establishment.

The Lüneberg convent appears to have aimed at a good deal in the musical way: "on Sundays and holydays a motett at least was performed at morning service, and at afternoon service an *aria*[1] with organ accompaniment," and there was a good musical library attached to the church. But the fact is that Bach's school was wherever and whenever he could hear good music, especially good organ-playing. His genius was essentially and in the first place instrumental rather than vocal; and the instrument of his day, the great medium through which any man of exceptional powers as a composer made known his ideas, and on which players of exceptional ability displayed their executive powers, was the organ. To be sure, the display was in almost any case of something more than execution, for the custom of the day leaned towards extempore playing on the organ, a very different matter from merely executing music previously written. This may have sometimes led to people having to listen to rather mediocre music by players whose manual powers exceeded their mental, but it gave a double interest to the exhibition of the really eminent men who combined in themselves the functions both of composer and executant. The organ performances given in churches under these conditions were the musical excitements of the day; and as people now crowd to hear a pianoforte recital by an eminent pianist, so they then crowded to the churches to hear the organ fantasias of Pachelbel, Buxtehude, and others, whose names, if not perhaps harder than

"Colkitto, or Macdonel, or Galasp,"

have a characteristic ring of the old German muse about them, rough and racy of the soil.

[1] Not to be confounded with the modern use of the term *aria*, an "air" for a solo voice. The *aria* of Bach's day was usually a harmonized composition for several voices. An exquisite little movement so named occurs in one of Bach's motetts for a double choir; it is somewhat like a chorale in rather free and extended form, with more elaboration of melody than characterized the chorale or psalm tune proper.

It is one of the meritorious points in Dr. Spitta's book that he clearly sees the great and central importance of the organ in relation to the genius and works of Bach. The whole style of Bach, even in vocal writing, is derived from the organ, and the organ was, even before he appeared, in process of becoming the bridge from the ancient comparatively expressionless music of laboriously intertwined parts, to the modern music in which the arrangement of parts was subservient and secondary to the requirements of effect and expression. This view is expressed by the author in a passage which is essentially a very thoughtful piece of criticism, though certainly not very lucid in expression :—

"The organ, with its echoing masses of chords produced by one man and progressing at his sole will and pleasure, was the most complete conceivable contrast to the ancient chorale music, that rich and complicated tangle of so many individual voices which could never altogether become mere instruments. This, more than anything else, brought about the transformation from the old polyphonic to the new harmonic system. It may perhaps seem strange to many readers, and yet it is quite natural, that even the best masters, between 1650 and 1700, showed a much more homophonic spirit, a much more independent treatment of the pure vocal parts, than is compatible with the pure organ style, according to our modern conception of it. Of course the rigid and heavy quality of the organ does not require for its highest idealization mere external movement, as attained by runs and the spreading of chords, but an inner vitality from the creation of musical entities—for what else can we call melody and motive?—and by their intelligent reciprocity. But this is always a secondary, not, as in polyphonic vocal music, a primary consideration. We admire with justice the organic structure of an organ piece by Sebastian Bach, every smallest detail in it instinct with vital purpose; but the so-called polyphonic treatment, which clothes the firm harmonic structure, is but a beautiful drapery. It resembles a Gothic cathedral, with its groups of leaves that seem a spontaneous growth, and its capitals wreathed with flowers and leaves; they call up to our fancy the seeming of independent life, but they do not live; only the artist lives in them. This radical distinction cannot be sufficiently insisted on; without a comprehension of it, the whole realm of organ music as an independent art, and all that has any connection with it, including the whole of Sebastian Bach's work, cannot be understood."

If I may take upon me to express the author's meaning a little more clearly, it seems to be this: that in the older polyphonic school of vocal writing, where the progress of each part was considered separately, and the result was a twining together of separate melodies, the total expression was only such as might arise from this blending of all parts, and was not an innate and preconceived idea or intention on the part of the composer; while in such things as Bach's organ fugues, even when they appear as written in a certain definite number of parts (four or five as the case may be), the central idea or expression of the work is conceived *apart from the part-writing*, which is merely Bach's way of casting or embodying the idea in musical form. The same remark would apply equally to Handel's choruses, and represents the real distinction between them and such music of the older school as that of Orlando Gibbons. With the latter part-writing is an end; with the former it is only a means.

The freeing of instrumental music from strict polyphonic form had been commenced, through the organ, a generation or two before Sebastian Bach came upon the scene. Of his uncle, Christoph Bach, the most talented of his predecessors in the family, we are told that he "deliberately widened the breach" between the choral and the organ forms of music. In his works "the progression of the parts is often quite untraceable; chords occur now in three parts and now in four, in obedience to purely harmonic requirements; only in a few cases can we discern which is intended for the pedal or the manual bass. . . . Everywhere the feeling is clearly predominant that the whole conduct of the piece lies in the hands of a single individual;" a condition the importance of which, in contrast with a form of music in which so many individuals have to wait upon each other, and none can enjoy any separate freedom of expression, can hardly be overrated. That is, in fact, what makes the essential greatness and interest of the organ. It is the only musical means whereby immense power and great variety of tone can all be placed

under the controlling mind and hands of a single performer. And the manner in which this power began to be felt and taken advantage of is remarkably shown in the works of Buxtehude, some of which have been recently revived and republished, and who was the foremost player of the day when Bach was growing up into manhood. Buxtehude, who was a Dane, born in 1637, became eventually organist at the church of St. Mary at Lübeck, an office which he undertook along with the apparently obligatory condition of marrying the daughter of the previous organist; a trait of the times not to be passed over. Buxtehude held *Abend-musiken*, which seem to have been regular church concerts, in the church, and paid great attention to getting up as complete a band as possible in those days; but his organ-music is now of the chief interest to us, and is really an important link in the development of instrumental music. The idea of a distinctive organ style was hardly invented then; his organ pieces have a licentious freedom, as of a *virtuoso* emancipated from the bonds of mere Church music, and revelling in brilliant effects and feats of execution, in which, as Dr. Spitta happily remarks, "we already hear the spirits of modern music hurtling against the door of their prison." His best pieces are mostly fantasias, beginning with a prelude of brilliant scale passages or arpeggios, settling down into a more or less free fugue form, and usually concluding with a rattling *coda*, calculated to "bring down the house." In the peroration of one piece, in D major, he actually batters on the key-board with rapidly repeated full chords with both hands, on the full organ, the pedal marking the principal accents; a mode of treatment which modern classical organ-players would scout as vulgar and inartistic beyond redemption, but which is interesting as showing that the organ performances of that day were no mere scientific studies for musical purists, but were intended as exciting displays for a general audience. One of Bach's youthful proofs of energy and interest in his art was his taking a long journey on foot to hear Buxtehude

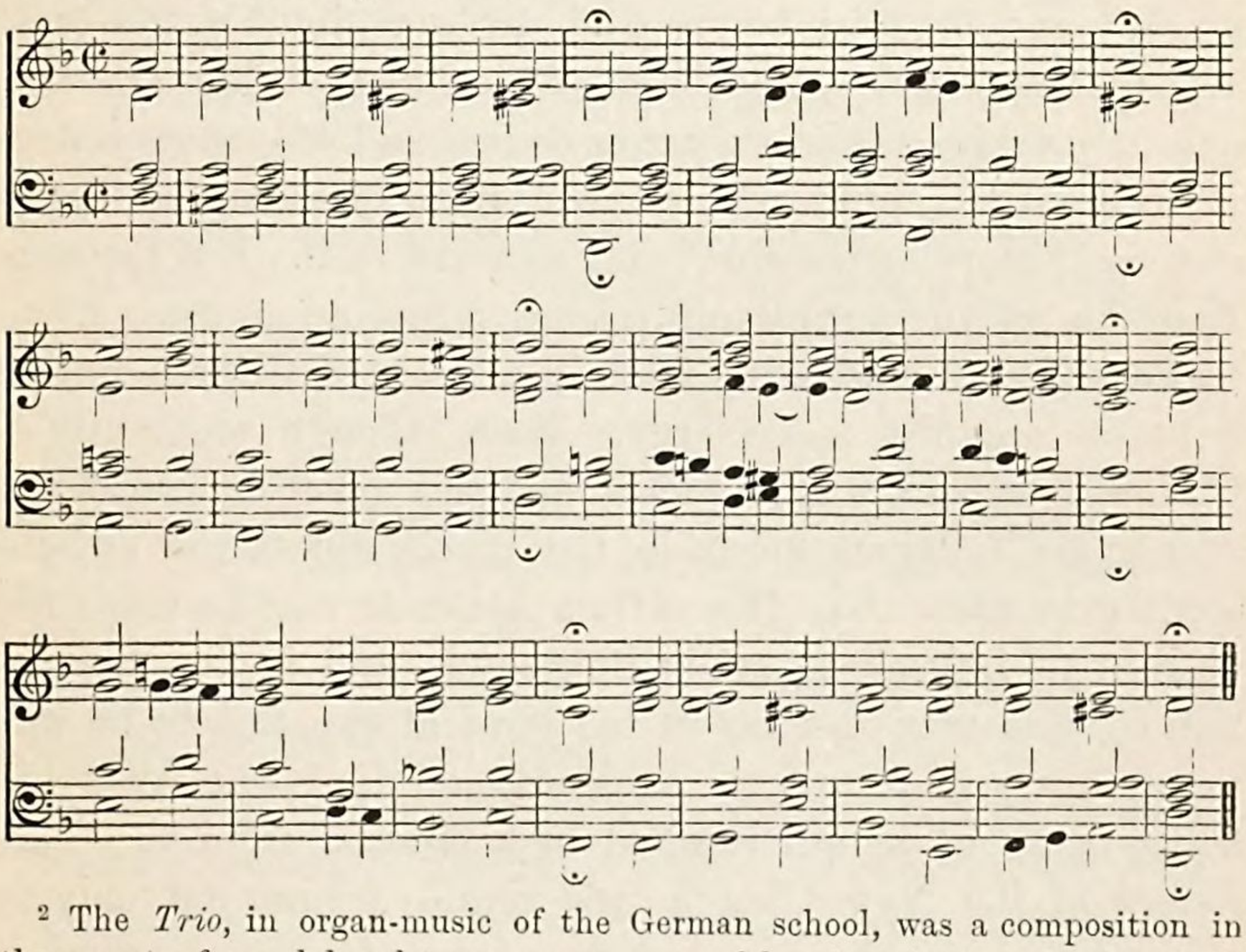
play and to study his style, and the influence of the Danish player on Bach's early organ-music is unmistakable; his brilliant show-piece, the Fugue in D major, with its pedal *cadenza*, is even written in obvious emulation of one particular work of Buxtehude's. But while in Bach's early organ-music the licenses, and what we now consider the false æsthetic of Buxtehude's organ style, are imitated, these disappear from his later works, which represent a purely organ style confining all its effects within the proper limits of the instrument. The organ ceases, in fact, to be a general means of producing instrumental music, and operates within its own special realm.

The other important and widely different musical influence of the day was the Church chorale or psalm tune. It would be impossible to overrate the significance of the German psalm tune as a means both of musical influence, and of musical and religious expression combined. Many of these grand and pathetic old melodies have the same national and impersonal character in musical, as proverbs have in literary, expression. They are the religious feeling of many and the musical expression of one; though their musical origin is in many cases untraceable. Unlike our variegated English church hymnody, where we may hear in half a dozen churches as many different tunes set to the same hymn, the German chorale was wedded to its words and indissolubly associated with them. Throughout dark days of war or religious persecution, its voice rose in confident faith or pathetic appeal; around it clustered the religious associations of generation after generation; it was sung in unisonal concent by whole congregations, prince and peasant together, "the storm their high-built organs made" supplying the harmony; it was sung round the hearth in days of rejoicing or of sorrow in the family circle; it was the key-note of the sacred cantata; it was the theme of fugues for the organ; it was the bass or the *cantus* in preludes, sometimes treated with tender grace as an accompanied melody, sometimes made the bass to a counterpoint on the full organ, as in Krebs's prelude on

"O Ewigkeit, O Donnerwort!" where the heavy pedal notes seem almost to speak the very words in thunder. And the chorale was worthy, even musically, of its dignities. There are in many of the finest of these tunes a concentrated grandeur or pathos, and a breadth of what may be called elementary musical expression, which can hardly be paralleled elsewhere. To appreciate to the full the depth of meaning inherent in such a tune as "Vater unser im Himmelreich"[1] is almost the work of a lifetime, and ability to do so might be taken as a test of the existence of the highest and most earnest musical feeling.

The combined treatment of these two leading elements of the music of the day, of the chorale and of organ-music in its various forms of prelude, fugue, sonata, or trio,[2] was the

[1] The following is the tune, as harmonized by Mendelssohn to form the theme of his Sixth Organ Sonata :—



[2] The *Trio*, in organ-music of the German school, was a composition in three parts, for pedal and two separate manual key-boards (one for the right hand, the other for the left) ; the two hand-parts were thus perfectly free to cross and recross each other with the same independence as two separate voices or two violins. The stops on the two key-boards were probably in general arranged so as to produce a distinctive contrast of tone.

outward and ostensible work of a great portion of Bach's artistic life. He was, in fact, known and regarded mainly as a church organist, and the details of his earlier life in this capacity throw some interesting light on his character as man and artist, on which we may touch, without following out the merely historic side of the story, for which the reader must be referred to the voluminous pages of the biography. Visiting Arnstadt at the age of eighteen, he played the organ at the New Church with such effect that he was at once adopted as organist in place of a predecessor of very commonplace talents, who had long given scant satisfaction, and who was shunted with little ceremony to make way for the young musician from Lüneberg. He was offered what was for those days a fair salary, and went through a solemn installation, receiving an exhortation to "industry and fidelity to his calling," and to "all that might become an honourable servant and organist before God, the worshipful authorities, and his superiors." The organ, which was considered a fine one in its day, was in existence as late as 1863, when a new instrument was built in honour of Bach's memory, as many of the old stops as possible being retained in it. But the continuation of the narrative furnishes rather an amusing illustration of the everlasting feud, in matters of Church music, between organist and clergy. Bach, though eminently a Church musician, was no pietist, and was not to be contented with mere religious spirit in the music unless the artistic spirit were there too. It was from Arnstadt that he made his journey to Lübeck to study Buxtehude, and in the fascination of this new opening in his musical experiences he was in no hurry to return to Arnstadt, and long outstayed his leave, being at length recalled by a citation from the Consistory of the New Church, who required him not only to account for his absence, but to answer for his eccentricities in accompanying the psalm tunes. His excuse for the absence was that he had gone to Lübeck to learn things connected with his art; but the accusation about the method

of accompanying must have been difficult to answer to the satisfaction of himself and his interrogators. The biographer gives in full the curious report of the Consistory, preserved in the archives of the Principality of Sondershausen, under the title "John S. Bach, organist of the New Church, summoned respecting his prolonged absence and the discontinuance of the part-singing; 1706." The paragraph about the musical question runs :—

"*Nos*" [the Consistory : the report takes the form of question and answer between *Nos* and *Ille*] "charge him with having been in the habit of making surprising *variationes* in the chorales, and intermixing divers strange sounds, so that thereby the congregation were confounded. If in the future he wishes to introduce some *Tonus Peregrinus*,[1] he must keep to it, and not go off directly to something else, or, as he had hitherto done, play quite a *tonum contrarium*. And then it is very strange that up to this time he has had no 'music-making' (*i.e.* rehearsals) by reason of his not being able to agree with the scholars. Therefore he is to declare whether he will play both part-music and chorales with the scholars ; since another Capellmeister cannot be kept, and if he will not do this let him say so categorically of his own accord, that a change may be made, and some one who will undertake it may be appointed to the post.

"*Ille.* If a proper Director be appointed, he will play again.

"*Resolvitur :* That he shall explain his conduct within eight days, and at the same time that scholar Rambach appear, and be reproved for the *désordres* which up to this time have taken place between the scholars and the organist in the New Church.

"*Ille* (*i.e.* Rambach). The organist, Bach, used to play too long preludes, but after this was notified to him by the Herr Superintendent, he went at once to the opposite extreme and has made them too short."

Irritabile genus musicorum ! The obvious fact was that Bach could not restrain himself from indulging his fancy in harmonizing the chorale melodies in various ways as he went on, playing musical experiments with them, quite intelligible to himself, and, perhaps, quite compatible with devotion on his own part, but bewildering to the less-enlightened con-

[1] "Tonus Peregrinus," it may be observed, is a name applied to one of the Gregorian tones ; but here it evidently means modulating into a foreign key, so far at least as the worthy elders knew what they meant at all.

gregation, who naturally regarded this as a wanton hindering of their worship. That might be capped with a modern anecdote of a very distinguished Church musician and organist (now dead) who, in accompanying a great concourse of people in singing the Hundredth Psalm, chose to play an interlude after each verse landing them a semitone higher in the scale for the next verse, to their great discomfiture when they found themselves, at the "Doxology," singing the tune a major third higher than they had commenced it. The significance of the story in regard to Bach lies in its indication how completely he carried the spirit of the artist into his sober work of a Lutheran church-organist. It is true that he unquestionably failed in his obvious every-day duty of drilling the stupid and intractable choristers, but this kind of stiffneckedness seems only to have belonged to his younger days, and was natural enough to a young genius conscious of his powers, and feeling the whole realm of musical art before him to be conquered: in his mature years he cheerfully accepted the more prosaic duties incident to his post at Leipzig, but for the present it was months before he answered the Consistory or put himself into the harness they had engaged him to work in, and in the interim he had also to answer to a charge of having brought a "stranger maiden" into the church to "make music" there—not at the service, for in that women took no part; boy choristers were *de rigueur*, as in a Catholic church—but on some other occasion. This, however, seems to have been in the way of legitimate courtship, as he married his cousin, Maria Barbara Bach, from Darmstadt, shortly afterwards, and probably had found that little musical *symposia* with the fair singer in the organ-loft at occasional times, he playing and she singing, formed no bad prelude to a more permanent engagement. Not only the artist and lover, however, but the craftsman comes before us in the records of Bach's early church-organist life. He knew all about the technical build of the "huge house of the sounds"; his thoroughly practical

specification for the repairs and improvement of the organ at his next post, the Blasius-Kirche, at Mühlhausen, which is given in full, is very interesting as well in its provisions as in its downright and dictatorial tone, as of a man who knew thoroughly what he was about and would have no scamping; and it may be mentioned, as showing how little inclined was Bach at this time to anything like the asceticism of the modern purists on the organ, that he not only gives special directions about the repair of the "tremulant," so that it may be regular in its pulsations, but that he added to the pedal a new "Glockenspiel," or scale of bells, played by the pedal keys. What would be said to this in a modern church-organ? There is a Glockenspiel stop on the Crystal Palace organ, and when the first organ-player of the day presumed to introduce this at one of the Handel Festivals, in a particularly bell-like passage in Handel's First Concerto, it was edifying to observe how the critics came down upon him. Bach's former organ at Lüneberg had a "Cymbelstern" also, a contrivance for striking cymbals in the organ, probably by a special pedal.[1] Whether these additions are really in keeping with the genius of the instrument, and whether Bach himself, in his mature period of more serious organ composition, would have cared as much about them, of course may be questions to be asked; but the fact is interesting as showing that organ concerts in the good old days were by no means the sedate and solemn affairs that they are often supposed to have been.

The main object of this essay, however, is to attempt some little critical analysis of the æsthetic elements in the stupendous mass of compositions which Bach has left. I use the epithet as much in regard to quality as quantity; the absolute quantity of his work is very great, but it

[1] A London builder had an organ in the Exhibition of 1862 containing cymbals, a drum, and a triangle, actuated by various pedals. It was a good deal laughed at at the time; and certainly there is no need now to make an organ do what a modern band can do so much better.

seems overwhelmingly so when we consider what is the character of most of it; that it represents a degree of technical and constructive elaboration such as is only to be matched in the most highly-wrought works of Mozart, and that it is nearly all written in the most serious artistic spirit and wrought up to the highest finish. The amount and the quality of his music show indubitably that, however it may seem in one sense to be more laboured and less spontaneous than that of other great composers, it is in reality the work of one to whom the feats were easy that are difficult to others, and who could express his feelings through the most involved and intricate problems of musical construction as fluently as Rossini could write *scenas* or Strauss produce waltzes. Whether this elaborately built-up music is calculated to satisfy all the longing of the soul athirst for emotional expression; whether it is not in some of its developments rather matter for curious study than for unfettered enjoyment, is a question of some interest, and the more so when we consider the remarkable set which has been made in the direction of a Bach-culture of late, and the almost unadulterated worship which his biographer offers at the Bach shrine. Biographers have privileges, and it is certain that only an almost unlimited enthusiasm for his subject could induce any one to go through the arduous labour which Dr. Spitta must have gone through in laying the foundations of and then writing this enormous biography; but there can be little doubt that even among musicians there is just now a rather exaggerated reaction towards Bach, following naturally upon long neglect; that among many of the general musical public who profess a devout faith on the subject there is little ability to render a reason; and that a great many persons at present "talk Bach" with only a very vague idea as to what are his really great qualities, his shortcomings (for these exist), or his place and influence in reference to the art of music generally.

The works which most especially represent the basis out

of which Bach's organ-music grew up, the organ compositions founded on chorales or hymn tunes, are still an absolutely dead letter in this country to all but a very few organ-players. They are scarcely ever played in churches, which would seem their most fitting arena; they do not suit our present ideas or associations in regard to devotional music, and comparatively few English church-organs possess the quality of tone and the weight and power on the pedal organ which are necessary to give the effect intended by the composer in the most important of these compositions.[1] If an organist of very classical tastes introduces one of these compositions in the course of a recital on a large concert-organ, it is listened to with bewilderment by most of the audience. as something quite out of the circle of their musical sympathies. And so it actually is. It is the musical expression of a religious form and feeling out of keeping with the religious cultus of modern England. To enter into it one must be to some extent in an archæological frame of mind; as Mendelssohn, the devout student of Bach, must have been when he brought out, during his stay in England, his edition of this class of Bach's compositions, which must now be looked for in second-hand music-shops and book-stalls. Certain of the larger of these works, no doubt, are of perennial interest to those who can hear with the understanding. The one on "Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele," with its exquisitely finished accompaniment, wandering dreamily about in continuous flow (as Schumann beautifully said, "twining

[1] In regard to the instrument, the main distinction is this: the modern English church-organ is generally too brilliant and not sufficiently full in tone for giving the broad yet quiescent expression required for this music; and the pedal organ is generally quite insignificant in comparison with that of the organs on which Bach played. Many of the smaller church-organs of his day in Germany had a power on the pedal organ which with us is considered quite unnecessary except for much larger and more costly instruments. Consequently, one of the favourite devices of Bach and his school, of keeping an independent composition progressing on the manuals, while the pedal at intervals thunders out the chorale, line by line, as a bass to the whole, cannot be rendered on most of our church-organs, or must be a failure if attempted.

golden garlands" about the principal melody); the "Nun danket Alle Gott," where the counterpoint so cunningly fashions itself on the lines of the hymn melody; the "O Lamm Gottes unschuldig," in three verses, closing with the *cantus* in the bass, and accompanied by a pompous counterpoint figure in triplets (quite out of keeping, by the way, with the feeling of the hymn): these and some others should be known to all who take their pleasure in music seriously. But a large proportion of the collection must now be regarded as archaic fragments of an extinct form of art, historically and constructively of great interest, but from which the breath of life has departed.

It is far otherwise, however, when we come to the great organ compositions which, though originally composed for and played in churches, are in fact concert-pieces (the church being also the concert-room with Lutheran organists) designed to display all the powers of the instrument and all the musical and executive abilities of the composer. The latter, the executive element, must not be left out of account. There is abundant evidence (some of it known before, some of it new in Spitta's biography) that Bach attached great importance to executive power; that he had a great repute on this account, especially for his remarkable execution on the pedals[1]—*bravura* playing, it might be called, considering the probably cumbersome key-board and mechanism of the pedal of those days—and that he was particularly proud of this himself. He entered the lists with the other famous players of the day, and beat them all out of the field. Now, this is a very significant fact if we take it in connection with the fact that in organ-music alone the work of Bach retains entirely its position as the leading music for the instrument it was written for, unsuperseded by any more modern composition of the same class. His Chacones and other pieces for the violin, effective and astonishing as they

[1] It was said of him that he could play as rapidly and brilliantly with his feet as ordinary players could with their hands.

are (though not always beautiful) when played by the few violinists able to master their technical difficulties, are no longer typical violin music. His *Wohltemperirte Klavier* is an immortal work on its own basis, but it no longer represents the most characteristic and typical form of pianoforte music. When a great violinist is to do his best on a great occasion, he probably selects Beethoven's Violin Concerto. When a new and ambitious pianist wishes to win his spurs, he desires to show what he can do with the E flat Concerto or one of the later Sonatas of Beethoven. But when an organ-player is fired with the same ambition, he finds nothing since Bach which can equally display his power over the true capabilities of the instrument. When M. Saint-Saëns, one of the most modern in sympathies among French musicians, desired to display his powers as an organist to the London Philharmonic audience, he selected Bach's Prelude and Fugue in A minor; nor could any more crucial test have been found. The only organ-works that can be named, since those of Bach as classical organ-music of the first rank, are Mozart's two Fantasias in F minor, written for a mechanical organ (perhaps a little too orchestral in style) and Mendelssohn's Sonatas and Fugues; very fine and interesting, and containing some distinctly new ideas in the treatment of the instrument, but not comparable to the works of Bach even in effectiveness, putting constructive power out of the question. Surely this is a fact very significant, in regard to the question of the attitude of the artist to the world around him, of the influences under which the most living art is produced. Everything else that Bach did was more or less done to himself alone and to his own artistic satisfaction. In organ-playing and organ-composition alone he came in direct contact with the world of his day, and entered into public competition with his contemporaries on their own ground. Hence the still modern interest of his organ compositions; hence too, what is quite incontrovertible, his superior brilliancy and variety in this class of compositions as compared with

those which were not written directly for the public ear of his day.

That these organ-works of Bach do not take public place at present by the side of Beethoven's Sonatas for the piano is chiefly owing to the way in which the organ has dropped out of fashion—partly from the size, cost, and immobility of the instrument, which renders the private cultivation of a knowledge of organ-music impossible, except for very wealthy amateurs (for the things called chamber-organs are mere "boxes of whistles," giving none of the great character of the instrument), partly from the fact that our principal and most frequented classical concert-rooms do not contain adequate instruments; consequently our classical audiences know only two or three of these great works, which certain pianists take the liberty of playing on the piano, with a result which, to those who know their effect as played on the original instrument, is simply absurd.[1] Dr. Spitta's judgment that these

[1] I cannot bring myself to pass over this æsthetic absurdity without flinging in some stronger and more decisive comment upon it. In St. James's Hall, the most frequented classical concert-room of London (and a wretched place it is, for such a purpose and in such a city!) there stands a fair-sized organ by a good builder; but except in one or two isolated instances no organ-work by the greatest composer for the organ has ever been heard upon it by a Philharmonic or a Monday Popular audience; by the latter, I think, never. But every now and then the organ-works of Bach are (mis)represented to the audience by some pianist who chooses to play the A minor or the B minor Prelude and Fugue (these are the two favourites) on the piano, and is applauded for doing so by an audience who would regard the performance with ridicule if they had the least idea what is the true effect of the music as played on the instrument for which it was composed. What can a pianoforte do with this chain of linked harmonies (bearing in mind, too, that the pedal notes really sound an octave below the notes written)?



are the only instrumental works which can be paralleled, in perfection of form and power of expression, with the greater works of Beethoven, is not overstating the case. The Toccata in F, the great Fugues in G minor and A minor, the Prelude and Fugue in B minor, that "in the Doric mode," and others, belong to those few works of the highest realm of art, in which the form is a perfectly rounded whole, and in which not a detail can be altered or omitted without detracting from the perfect balance of the work.

There ought to be no occasion to recommend these great works to the appreciation of musicians, professedly so called (though I must candidly say that I have sometimes been astounded at the ignorance of them which exists even among professional musicians who are not organ-players); but to general musical readers, who have few opportunities of hearing them, and do not much avail themselves of those, it may be opportune to say something more in detail as to a series of compositions which ought to be as familiar to every true



or what do people imagine is the effect of the pedal *cadenza* at the end of the A minor Fugue, clanked in octaves on a piano in a big hall, to those who are accustomed to hear it thundered out with the full power of a large pedal organ? Simply futile. Yet so ignorant or prejudiced on this subject are our average concert-goers, that many who would applaud the travesty of one of these great works on the piano would not go to hear it on the instrument for which it was written. The Monday Popular Concerts profess to adhere to a strictly classical *régime*. A pianist who offered to play there an arrangement of one of Beethoven's Symphonies for the piano would not be listened to; yet that is no greater a musical blunder than playing Bach's organ-works on the piano. To say that Liszt arranged them is nothing to the purpose. Liszt should have known better.

amateur as the pianoforte Sonatas of Beethoven. The organ-works of Bach are very voluminous, and the ten volumes of the admirable edition of Dr. Chrysander (published by Peters of Leipzig) contain a considerable proportion of compositions which, like the sets of Variations for the Piano of Beethoven's earlier period, are now of more historical than artistic interest. This may be said, perhaps, of most of those entitled "Sonatas." These are nearly all "Trios" for two manuals and pedal (as previously explained), and are mostly rather *rococo* in style, and do not bring out the greatest qualities of the instrument; the rather thin effect of the single parts on the two separate manuals would be intensified if played on loud stops, even if English organs afforded the requisite arrangement of two manuals of equal power, which they mostly do not.[1] Certain of the Preludes on Chorales, as already mentioned, are works of perennial interest, and the eighth volume of the Leipzig edition contains a really great composition, the *Passacaglia* in E flat, a set of variations on a ground bass, followed by a fugue. With these exceptions, the great organ-works are to be found in the second, third, and fourth volumes of Chrysander's edition.

These consist mostly of preludes and fugues on a large scale, with two or three isolated compositions entitled *Toccatas*, of which a word presently. The first thing to strike any critical eye in turning over these volumes, will probably be the extraordinary variety and individuality which distinguishes these compositions, all cast nominally in the same mould; much more so than in the *Wohltemperirte Klavier*, which it will be remembered was written for an educational purpose, while the organ fugues are purely musical in their object and origin. The latter are as varied, as distinct in their individuality of feeling and style, as Beethoven's piano-

[1] There is, or was, a remarkable exception in the fine old organ in the parish church of Northampton, which possesses two "great organ" manuals of equal power; an ideal arrangement for playing many of Bach's organ-works. There may be other examples in England, but I have never met with one.

forte Sonatas, though with so much less freedom of scope in regard to form and design. The mere quotation of the themes of a few of the fugues will in itself suffice to indicate this :—

1. (*Allegro moderato.*) *



2. (*Maestoso.*)



3. (*Allegro.*)



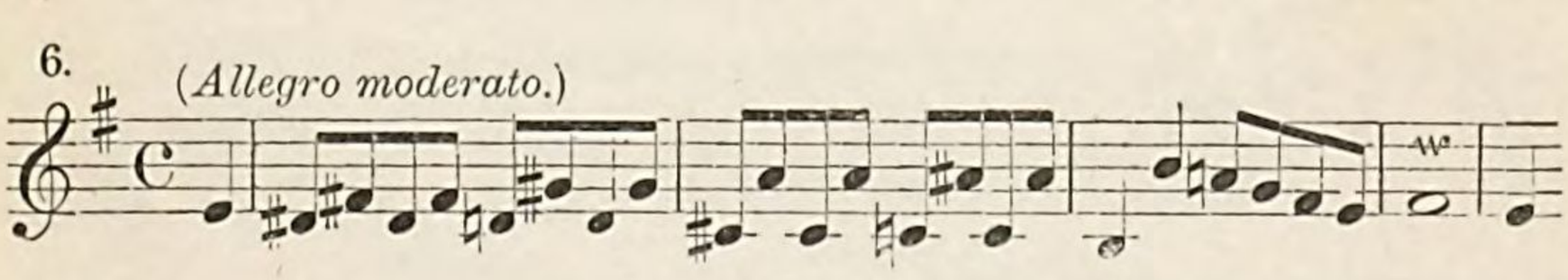
4. (*Allegro vivace.*)



5. (*con moto moderato.*)

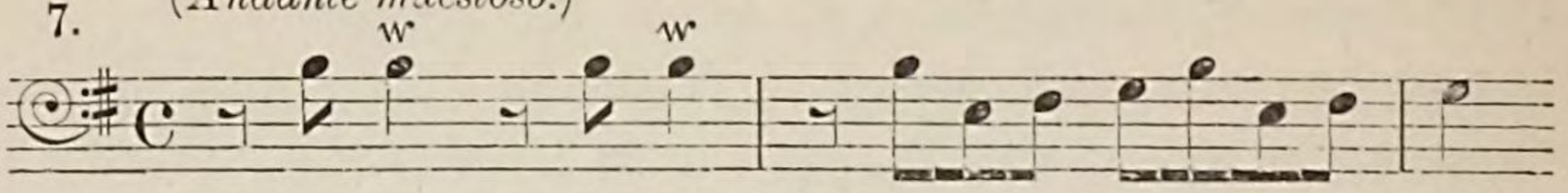


6. (*Allegro moderato.*)



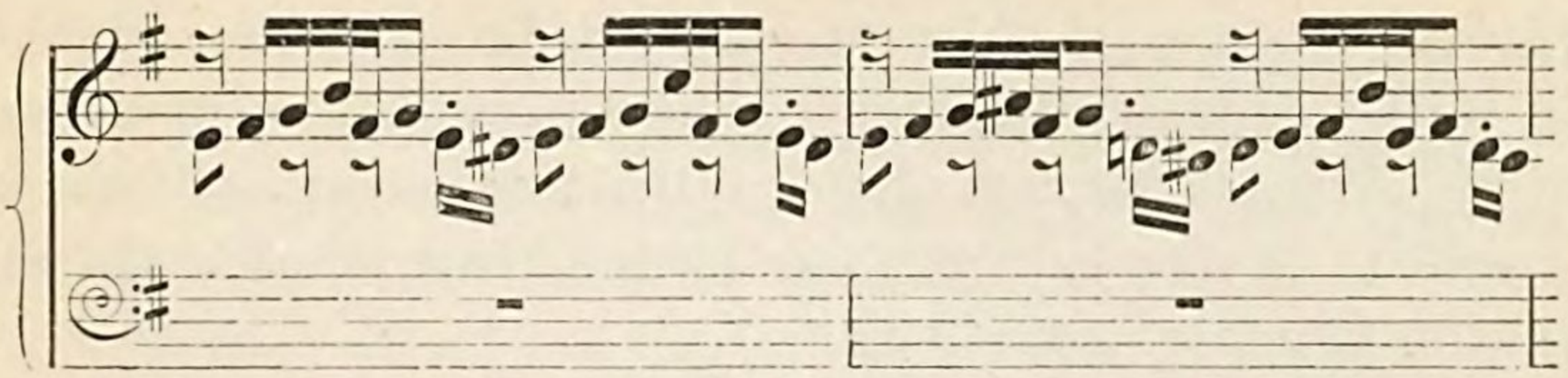
* These indications as to speed and character, placed in parentheses, are my own ; Bach, except in one or two rare instances, gives no indications as to *tempo*.

7. (*Andante maestoso.*)



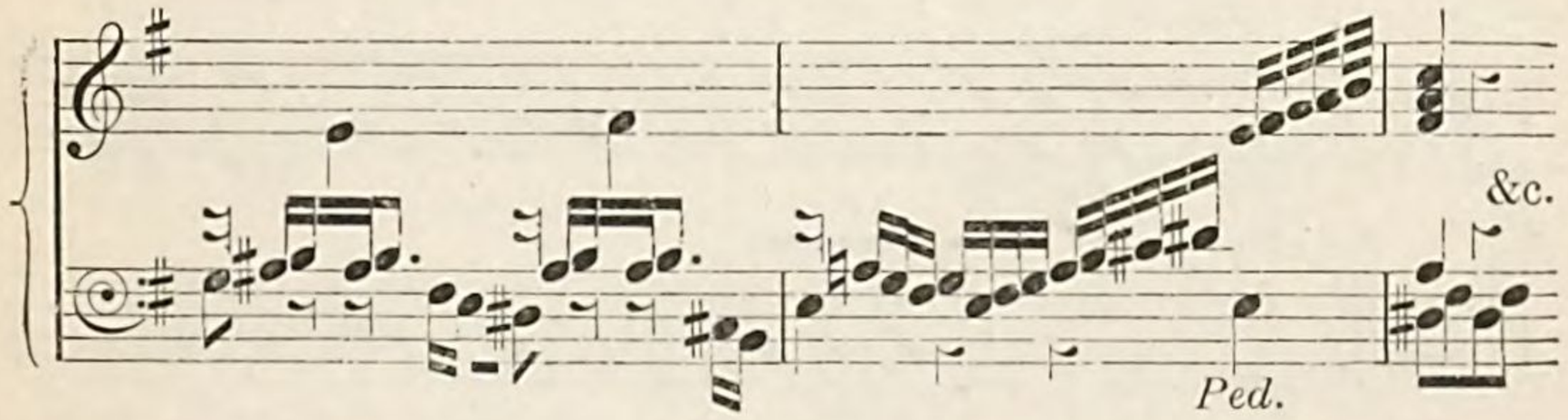
A further examination of these compositions will bring out a frequently recurring feature in them, which strikingly bears out the opinion quoted previously from Spitta, to the effect that the adoption of the fugue form was a secondary and not a primary object with Bach; that his object was not so much to write fugues for the sake of fugues, as to write effective compositions, which took the fugue form, as the prevalent instrumental form of the period, just as Beethoven's instrumental conceptions took the sonata form as the recognized form of his period: it was no more Bach's object to illustrate the fugue form than it was Beethoven's object to illustrate the sonata form; and both equally, while keeping nominally to the chosen form, departed from it when it suited the promptings of their genius. Thus, it is an essential characteristic of the fugue form, in its pure development, that the composition should have no full cadence before the close of the whole, no halting places by which it could be divided off into sections; it is a continuous movement of parts, of which each portion is inextricably linked with the passages preceding and following it, no point of rest being found till the final close. But many of Bach's organ fugues entirely ignore this condition of fugue-writing, and are really fugued fantasias rather than fugues. Thus, in the great E minor Fugue (No. 6 in the previous quotations of themes), the middle portion is a long and brilliant *intermezzo* of entirely free design, commencing with a passage remarkably modern in character—



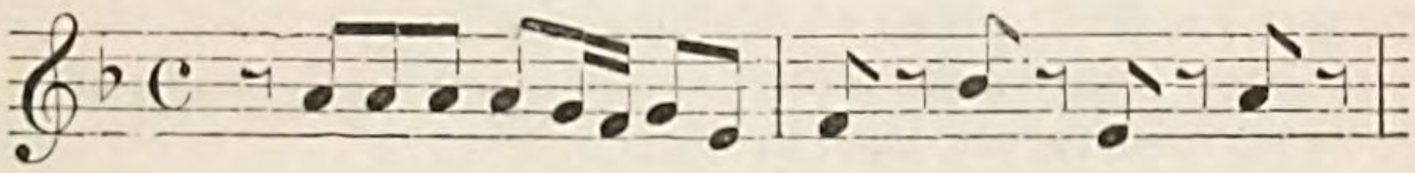




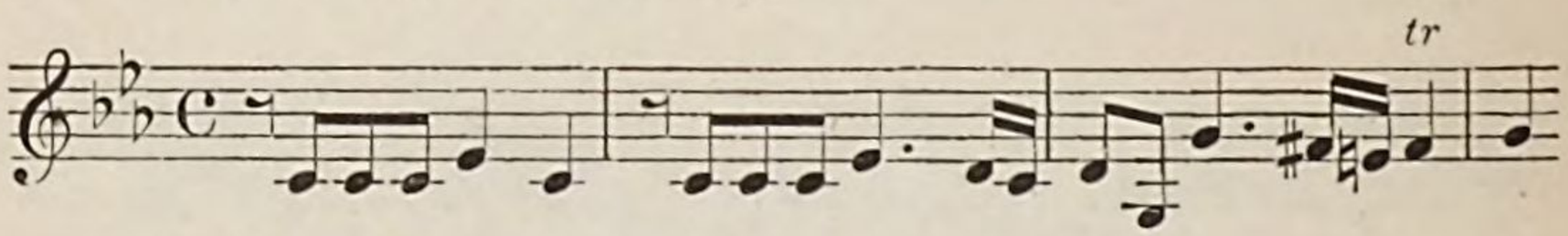




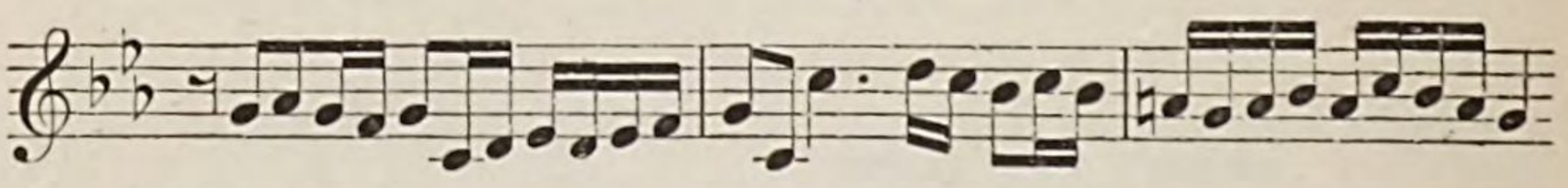
and which leaves the reader in no doubt as to the source of some of the most effective figure-passages employed by Mendelssohn in his pianoforte works. The "St. Ann's" Fugue (so called in England from the identity of the theme with an ancient melody which forms the first line of Croft's popular hymn tune under that name), consists of three movements in different *tempi* linked together, the first only being in strict fugue style; the Fugue in D minor—the well-known one originally written for the violin—



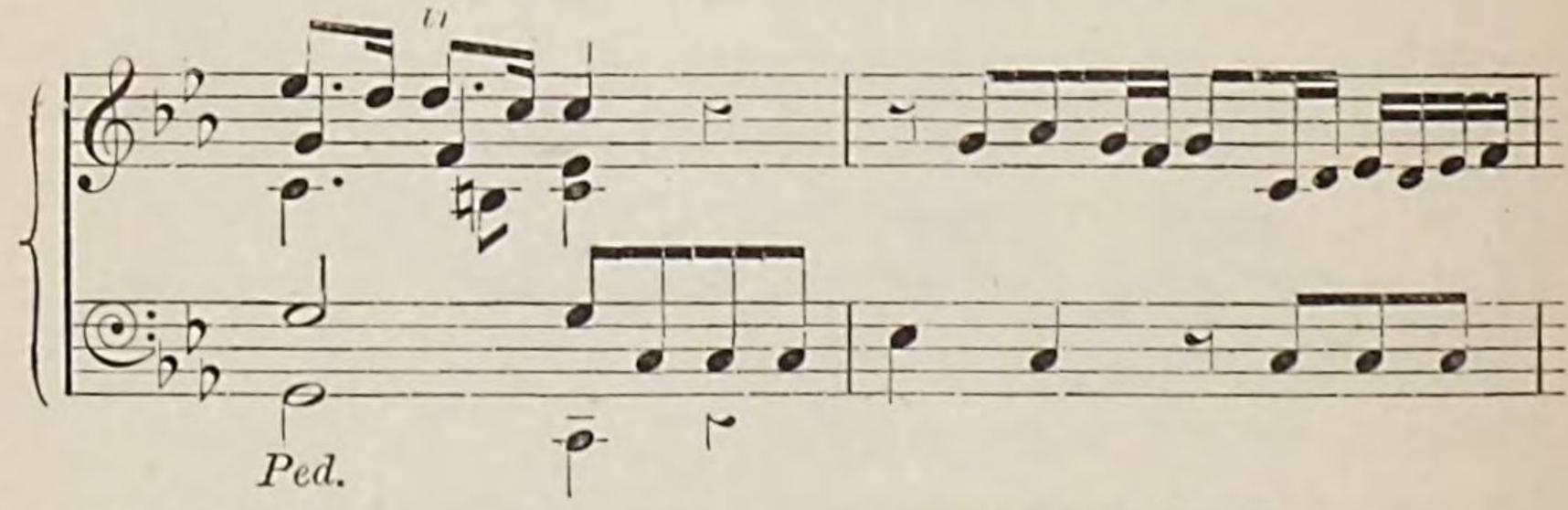
though it starts in strict fugue style, develops into what is in reality a free fantasia with fugued passages; so does that of the D minor Toccata (No. 3 in the previous quotations of themes). A fine example, less played than it ought to be, that in C minor, commencing—



is a double fugue of which the first subject is worked up to a full close before the second one is started—



the latter is then worked alone, leading to a complete cadence, suggesting even the conventional *ritardando* at the close of a composition; after which, for the first time, the two themes are brought together at a fresh start—[1]



and the whole composition closes with a brilliant *cadenza* in a perfectly free style, and entirely independent of the

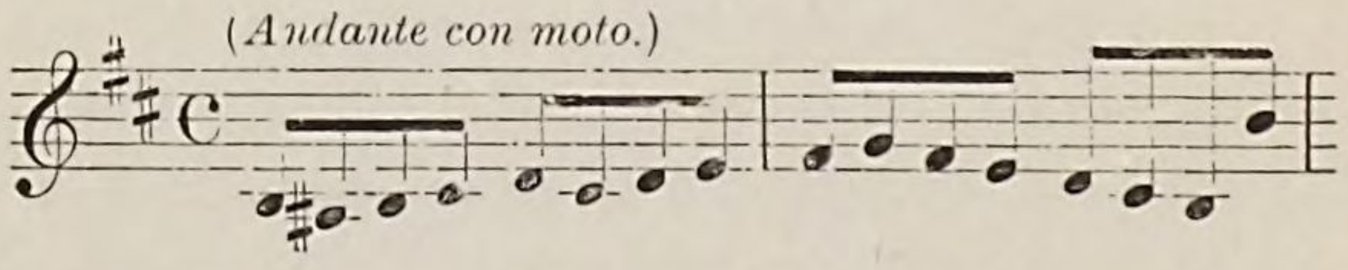
[1] This form of fugue, in which two subjects which will form a counterpoint to each other are first worked separately one after the other, and then combined, was subsequently made a kind of commonplace device by some inferior "school" writers of fugues, such as Eberlin.

theme or themes of the fugue. All these examples, and others which might be quoted, show that the predominant object in these compositions was musical effect and expression, and not scientific or correct writing.

A further study of these compositions, however, will show, apart from any historical evidence as to date of composition (of which there is little to be had), internal evidence that, as Bach's genius and his feeling in regard to organ-music deepened and strengthened by study and maturity, he showed a tendency to discard the effort after the more obvious and superficial form of effectiveness—that of mere brilliancy and the elaboration of figure-passages—in favour of a grander, more serious, and stricter style, and one more especially related to the powers that are peculiar to the organ as distinguished from other keyed instruments. The nature of the themes of his fugues alters in the later as compared with those which are obviously (from internal evidence) earlier compositions; there is less of mere tune in them, less of passages constructed on arpeggios of chords; more gravity and pathos of expression, and more of that unfettered movement in relation to the tonic of the key which gives scope for the finest effects of harmony and modulation. Thus, no one can doubt that the Fugue in D (No. 4 of the previously quoted themes) was an early work, even apart from its similarity with Buxtehude's style; the theme is simply a brilliant figure-passage, the latter portion having a curious similarity to the style of Handel's vocal *bravura* passages;[1] the whole composition consists of the repetition of these figure-passages in various positions, sometimes with fine and striking modulation; and the climax of the movement consists in an arpeggio *cadenza* for hands and feet alternately, not in any building-up of harmonic structure. The very beautiful and effective Fugue in G minor (No. 5 of the quotations—known to organ-players as "the little G minor"),

[1] Compare some of the "divisions" (as they used to be called) in "Rejoice greatly," for instance.

which is wonderfully effective on a large organ, is nevertheless built on what is far too much of a mere melodic phrase arising out of an arpeggio treatment of the tonic and dominant harmonies—a kind of superior form of *jödel*—to give occasion for the richness of harmonic combination and progression which should characterize an organ fugue of the highest class. How different is the whole style and suggestion of the one in B minor, which (as before observed), pianists are so fond of "traducing" for their instrument—



with the grand march of the subject up and down the scale; so vigorous in itself, so full of suggestion for contrapuntal treatment. It needs but a glance at the two themes to show how considerable a space of artistic life and progress lies between them. The scale form of the subject suggests (as is so often the case with Bach) a similar character here and there in the counterpoint, as in the golden passage which opens what may be called the *intermezzo* of the fugue—



a passage which is a fresh joy to the ear every time one comes to it, and which might have been expressly written in illustration of Milton's splendidly descriptive lines—

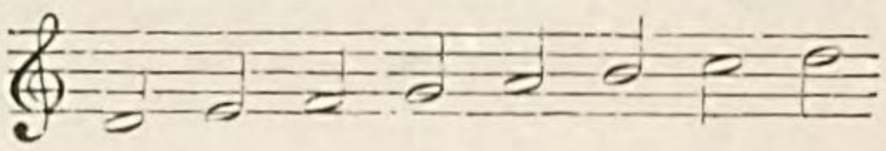
"His volant touch,
Instinct through all proportion, low and high,
Fled and pursued transverse the resonant fugue."[1]

[1] Intellectually speaking, this is perhaps the most spirited and powerful descriptive passage with which music has inspired any poet. Observe the

But the climax of Bach's later and most serious and elevated organ style is represented by the Fugue in D minor, of which the theme is given (No. 2) among the quoted themes on page 181; commonly called the Fugue "in the Doric mode," though in fact the theme is in D minor, the B flat being introduced as an "accidental."[1] Nothing can be broader or more majestic than the theme, with its repeated steps up by fourths to the higher extremity of the scale, its plain unadorned descending scale, and the syncopation of the scale passage, which seems so slight an incident at first, but is so prolific of grand harmonic effects in the progress of the composition. True, the theme may be said to lack expression and sentiment, but it is the scaffolding for a work which is to rise above mere sentiment; in which the breadth and grandeur of the whole conception, and its absolute unity and completeness of form, will not bend to taking the ear captive by any mere prettiness of detail. The whole composition is an unfolding of linked grandeur long drawn out—a great temple of sound built up with increasing amplitude as it progresses, suspension piled upon suspension, as it were, up to the climax. Hence there is no great instrumental composition, perhaps, which is æsthetically so unquotable (it is quoted frequently in works on counterpoint, as an example of construction—but that is another matter); you cannot single out a passage which can be detached from the context without losing half its meaning and majesty. It is not always, of course, that the musical intellect and sympathy are in tune for this kind of lofty and passionless utterance; our more partial and poignant human emotions need also their musical expression; it is only in the hours of intellectual victory over these that

peculiar force and aptness of the epithets "transverse" and "resonant" as applied to a fugue, and the amount of meaning summed up in them. "Resonant," of course, is to be taken in its primary and literal Latin signification.

[1] The scale of the Doric mode, it may be necessary to observe for the general reader, is D minor with the B natural:



we can find our minds in harmony with this "inexpressive"[1] stateliness of interwoven sounds, this

"Undisturbed song of pure concent."

Which reflection may perhaps suggest the reply to those who are disposed, with the cynical old organist in Browning's poem, to ask of Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha—

"What do you mean by your mountainous fugues?"

It is not the "moral of life," nor anything of the kind, that is meant by this and others of the great organ fugues; you might just as well ask for the moral of the Parthenon. It is not a case of

"Over our heads truth and nature—
Still our life's zigzags and dodges,
Ins and outs, weaving a new legislature—
God's gold just shining its last where that lodges,
Palled beneath man's usurpature."

It is just the reverse: it is something above nature. It is an appeal to the perception of metaphysical rather than of physical beauty; of a divine order of harmony and proportion above the accidents of terrestrial construction or of human passion; and therefore, as observed, not to be rightly appreciated save in a spirit of exaltation above these accidents. Browning's organist was in no mood whatever to do justice in his mind to "the master piece, hard Number Twelve," though with fingers and feet he had played it, as he boasts, "offhand and runningly." He was obviously dyspeptic at the time; he was in a bad temper about the "crank pedal"; he was in a bad temper with the sacristan; he was in a mood to swear at the inequalities of the gallery stairs; and it is ridiculous that his ebullitions of temper should be accepted as any kind of estimate of the value of one of the loftiest forms of musical art. It is in a far happier critical mood that

[1] "Harping in loud and solemn choir
With *inexpressive notes* to heaven's new-born heir."
—Milton's *Ode on the Nativity*.

Browning, in his perhaps somewhat over-quoted poem *Abt-Vogler*,[1] shadowed forth this loftiest type of impersonal music by the metaphor of a palace of sound built up by the player—

> "This which my keys in a crowd pressed and importuned to raise"—

a palace, too, not uninhabited or uninformed with spiritual life—

> "For there wanted not who walked in the glow and the glare,
> Presences plain in the place";

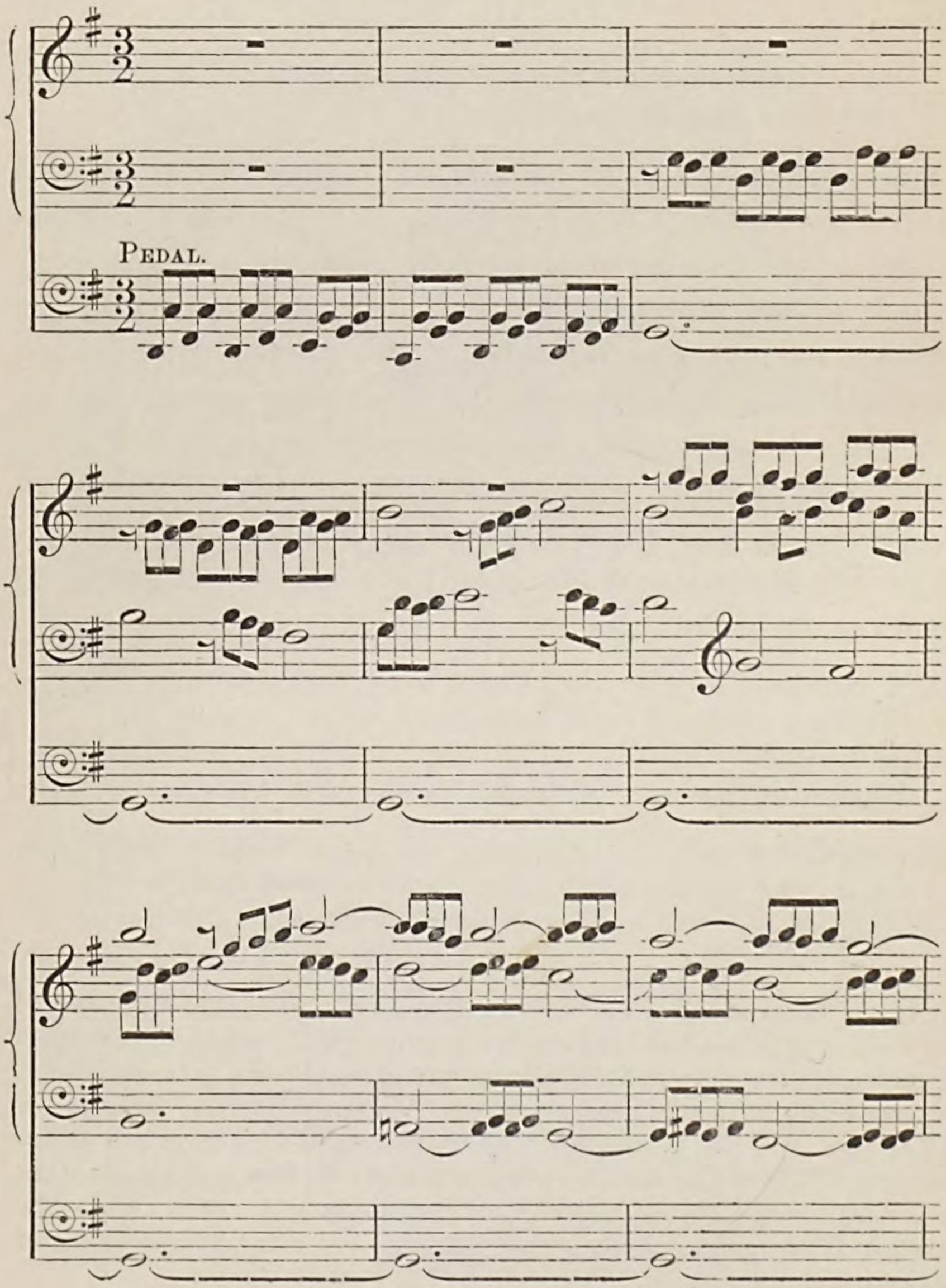
a fancy only to be fully understood, perhaps, by those who have known what it is to commune alone with Bach's organ fugues at the key-board of a grand organ in a great empty church or hall; the one light at the organ intensifying the mystery and gloom of the interior, the great pipes towering overhead into the darkness, and the empty spaces of the building echoing the thunder of the pedal notes, as of mighty voices singing in an unknown tongue. Other metaphors in the poem, too, whether so intended or not, are singularly applicable to the genius of the organ and of Bach's compositions for it: as, for instance—

> "And one would bury his brow with a blind plunge down to hell,
> Burrow a while and build, broad on the roots of things,
> Then up again swim into sight, having based me my palace well,
> Founded it, fearless of flame, flat on the nether springs.
>
> "And another would mount and march, like the excellent minion he was,
> Ay, another and yet another, one crowd but with many a crest,
> Raising my rampired walls of gold as transparent as glass"——

---

[1] It is a thousand pities, by the way, that Browning should have tacked the name of this musical charlatan to a poem which is really a very noble expression of the æsthetic of the highest form of organ-music. It would have been far better with an impersonal title—"The Organ Player," for instance, The excuse, of course, is that Abt Vogler professed to have invented an instrument which was to combine the qualities of all other instruments; but his invention was probably as great a humbug as the author of it; while the early part of the poem is really a most truthful and eloquent symbolism of the organ and organ-music.

a passage which has always recurred to my mind when playing the prelude to Bach's Fugue in G (vol. iv. Leizpig edition), where the pedal solo, after working gradually down from the top of the key-board, finally settles on the low G, and the composer begins deliberately to build upon this:—

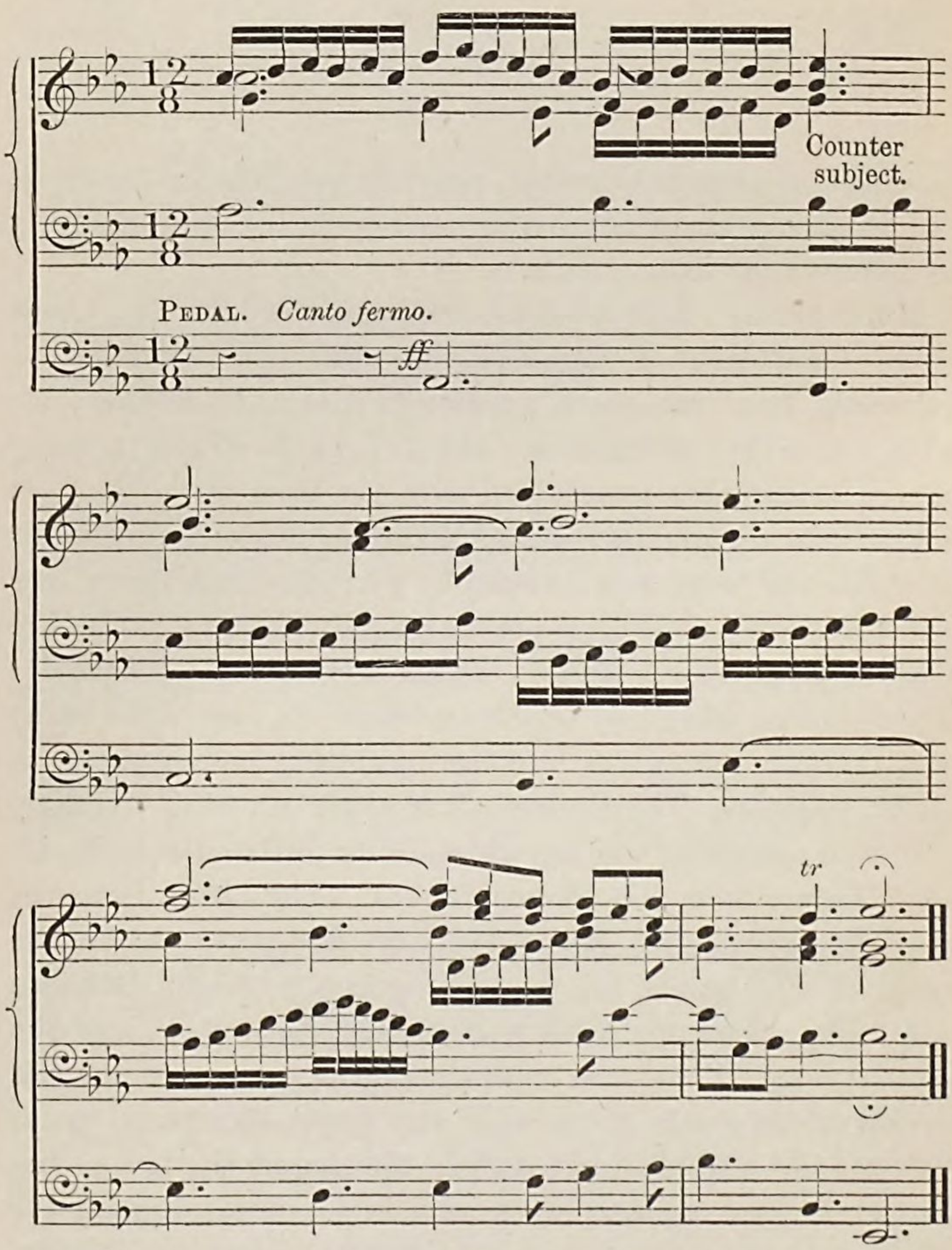




an effect, it may be observed, which is peculiar to the organ, and is absolutely unattainable on any other instrument or combination of instruments.

Much of the effect of these compositions depends on that grand institution of organ-playing, the pedal key-board: indirectly, from the much greater facility thus afforded for widely extended harmonies; the left hand, which in other keyed instruments is occupied with the bass, being thus left free to take the middle portions of the harmony; and directly, because on a large and completely furnished instrument the pedal organ is something more than a mere continuation of the bass through a lower octave—it has a powerful individuality of weight and tone, and stands out from the rest of the organ in a manner that gives immense emphasis and grandeur to special passages. The facility afforded for extended harmony leads to a manner of writing which quite differentiates Bach's organ fugues from his Clavier fugues. The latter, from the necessity of bringing three, four, or five parts within the grasp of two hands, are mostly written with the parts in rather close positions, as in part-writing for voices; and the emphasis given to the leading subject at any point must be dependent on the pressure of the finger on special notes which is impossible on the organ. Consequently, few of the Clavier fugues can be played with effect on the organ; the parts are too much massed together to stand out clearly. In the organ fugues it is Bach's constant endeavour to

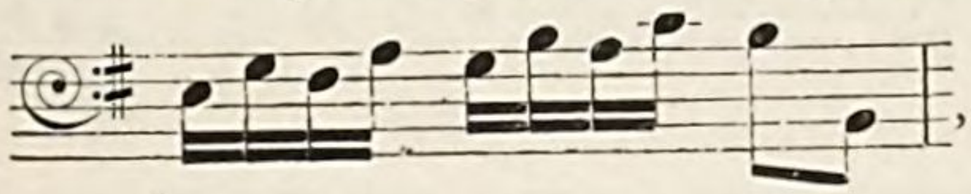
keep the harmony extended, and thus to give freedom and prominence to the inner parts ; and the manner in which he writes for the pedals shows his appreciation of the effect of wide intervals and bold spacing, giving a kind of colossal effect to the movement of the bass. The last two or three bars of the St. Ann's Fugue illustrate both points—



the fifth of the chord standing alone midway between the

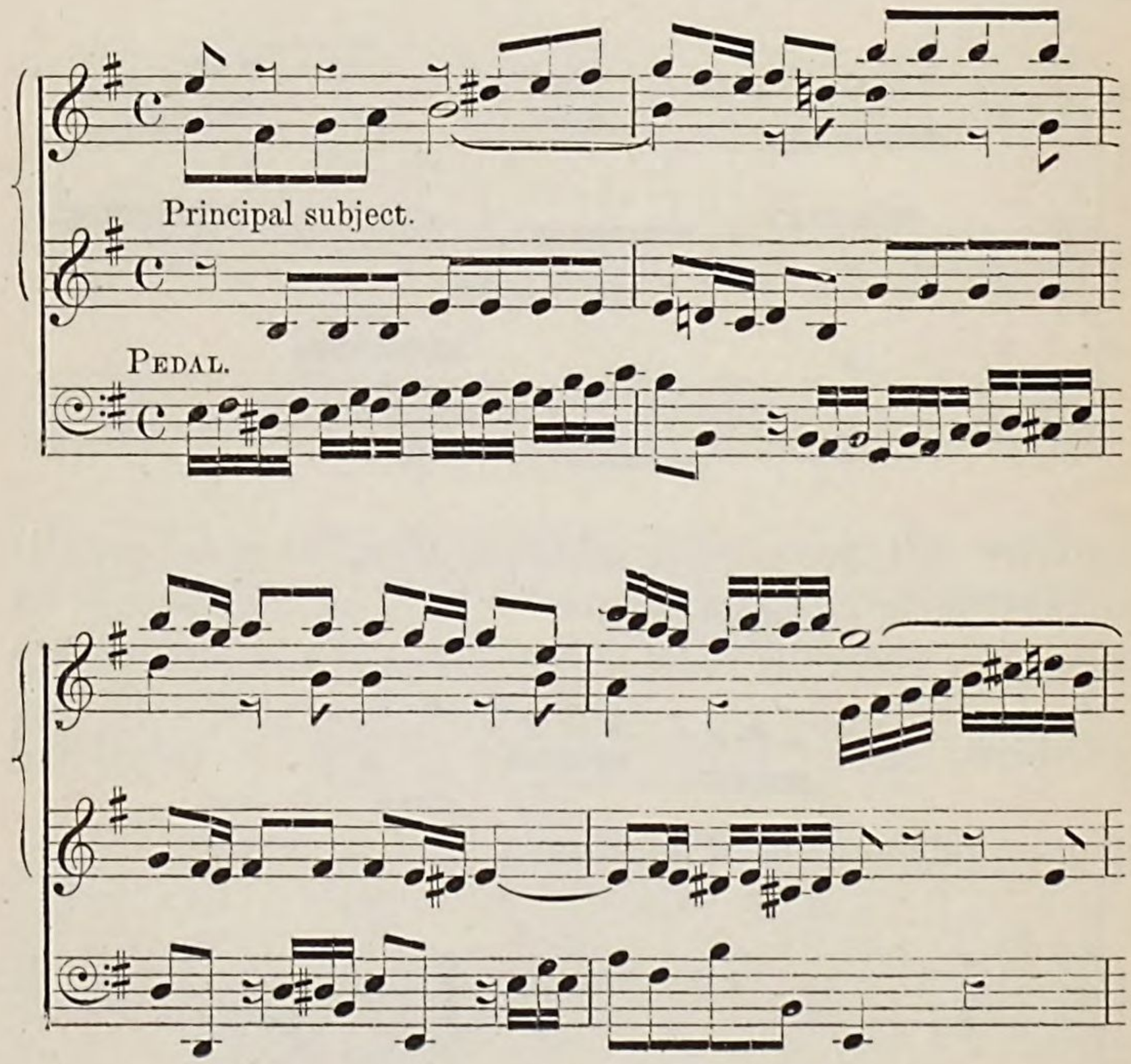
upper parts and the bass (it is more generally, however, the *third* that is treated in this manner); and the grand stride of the last three notes of the pedal part, from the high to the low B and thence to the E below that, which, on a large organ with a powerful pedal, stands out distinctly through the other parts, adding immensely to the effect of the conclusion. This feeling for great spaces and a large outline in the pedal part is frequently met with in Bach when he is at his best; in such passages as this, for instance, from the Toccata in F—



and the still more remarkable one from the grand prelude to the "little E minor Fugue" (No. 7 of the themes on page 181), where the pedal phrase, first given in progressions of thirds,  , is introduced again in progressions of tenths—

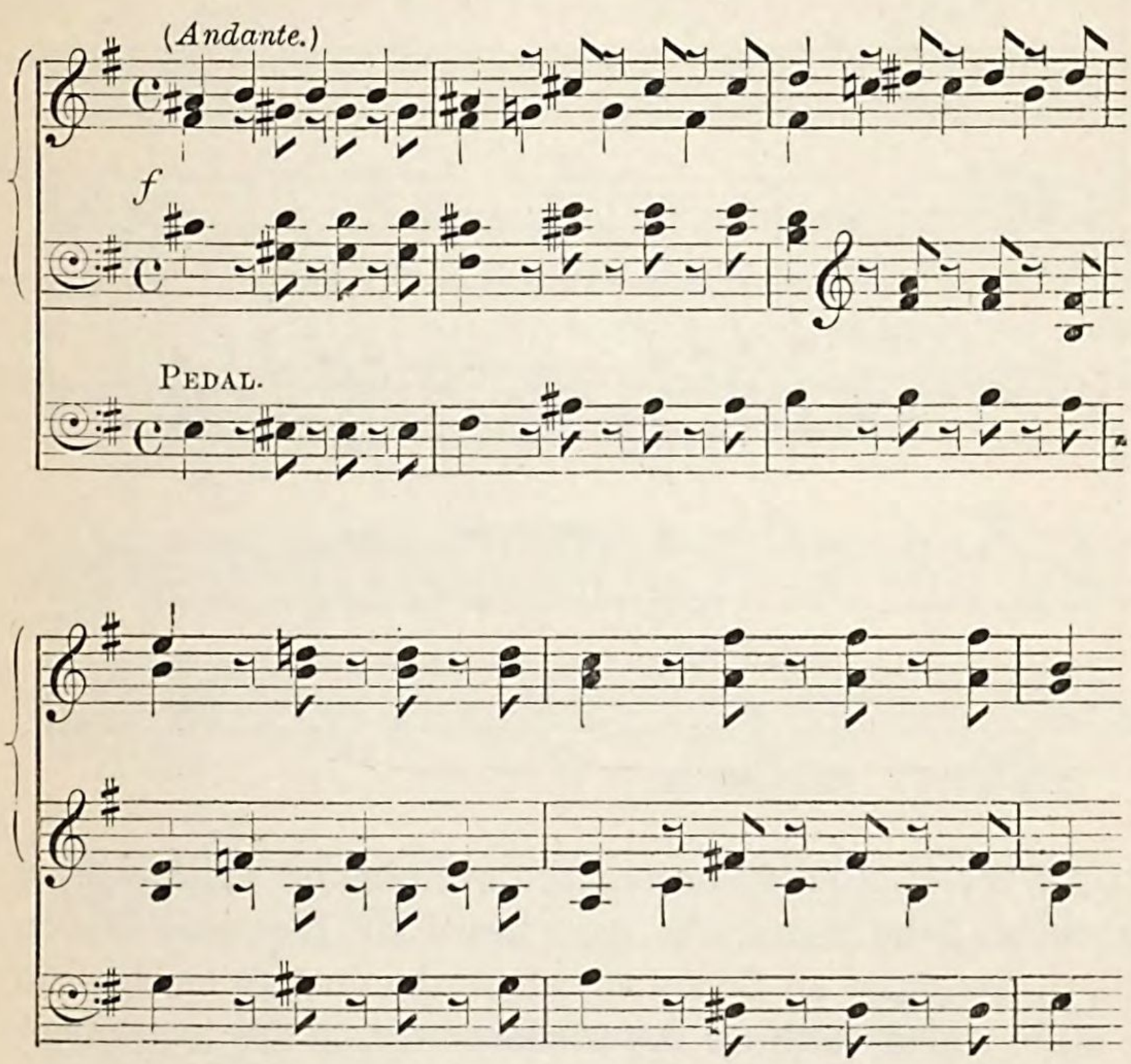


an incident imparting a wonderful impression of colossal scale to a short and in some respects simple composition. The following quotation from another fugue (*Chrysander*, vol. ii.) may be taken as a typical example of Bach's extended manner of distributing the parts, the principal subject in the tenor part thus standing out quite distinctly from the other parts, in spite of the impossibility of emphasis by touch on the organ :—

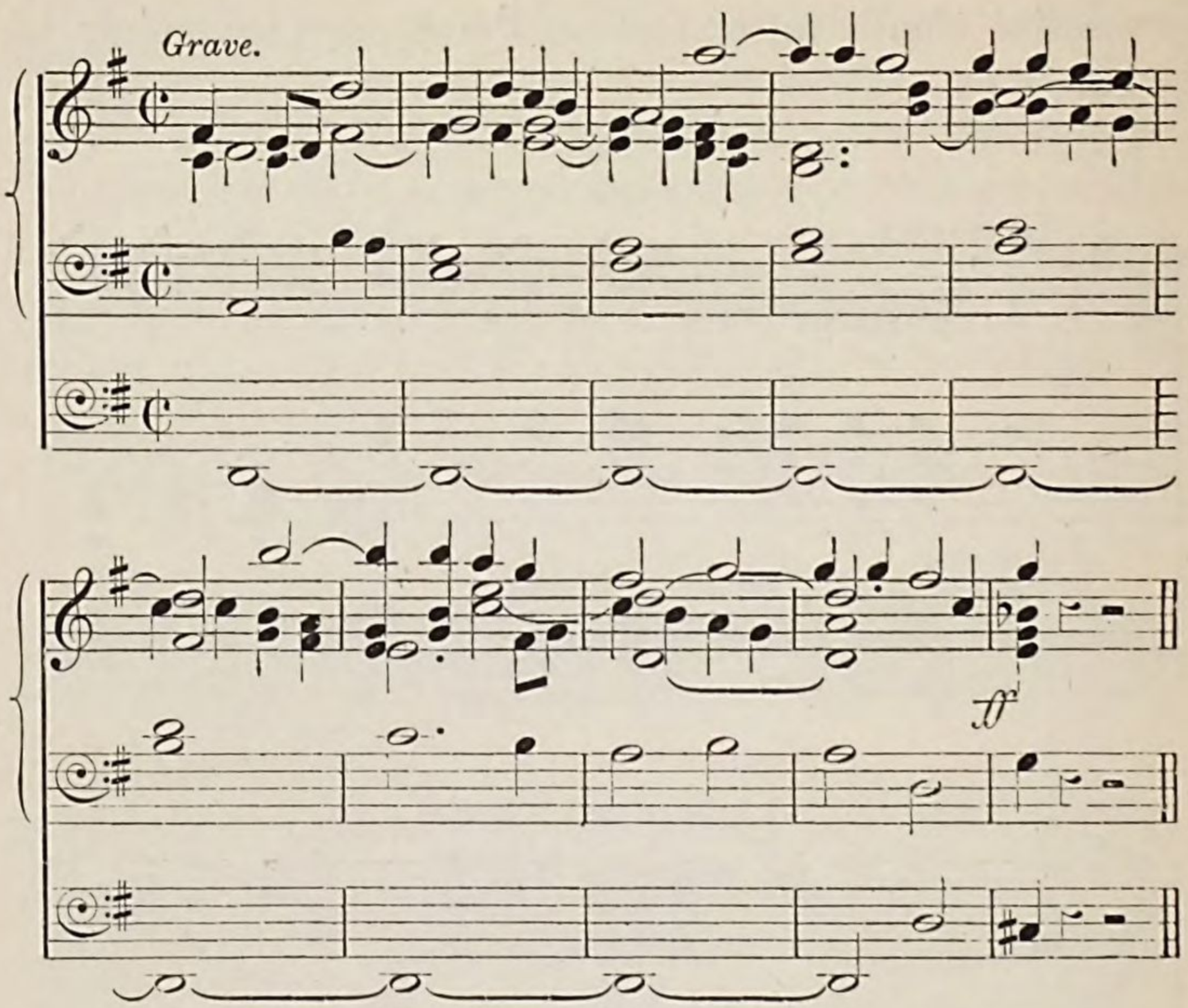


As examples of breadth and grandeur of treatment of another stamp, may be cited a portion of the middle passage of that remarkable "little" prelude in E minor just now quoted, where one part sings a *sostenuto* phrase accompanied

by massive chords introduced on the unaccented points of the bar—



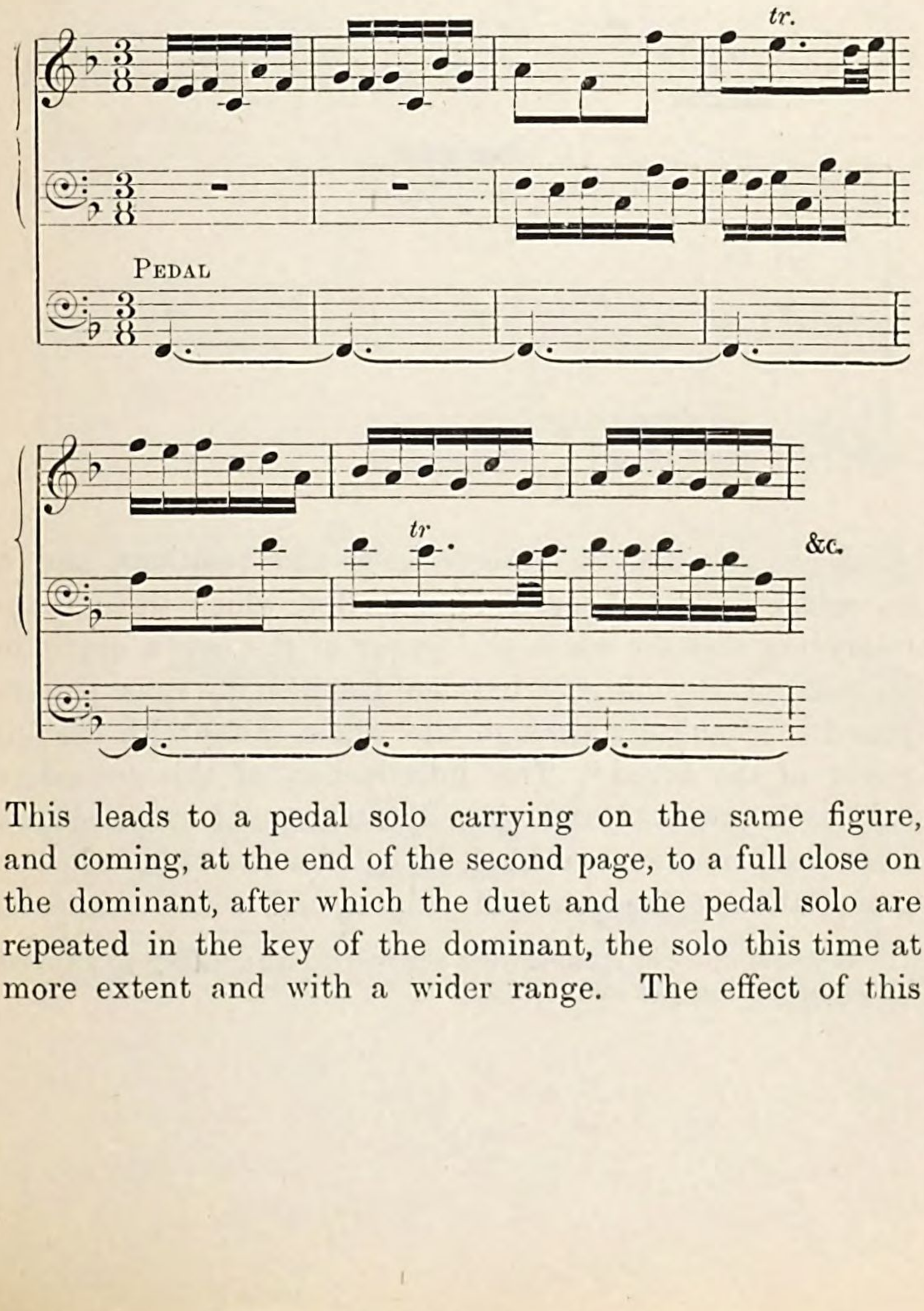
also an effect which cannot be realized on any other instrument, since the organ alone has the power of unlimited sustentation of a note. One more example of remarkable points in Bach's organ-music may be quoted—that at the close of the five-part *Allegro* of the Fantasia in G. This is a piece in pure organ style, a grand chain of suspensions and resolutions carried on continuously without a break, till the composer, as if feeling that a strong effort was needed to tear himself away, instead of bringing it to a regular close, suddenly brushes it aside with an abrupt chord of the diminished seventh on the sharp fourth of the scale—



The *ff* mark is an insertion, the meaning of which will be appreciated by those who have heard Mr. Best play this on the great organ at Liverpool, where the modern mechanism is made use of to throw the whole power of the instrument suddenly into this defiant chord, which seems to shake the hall like an earthquake shock, the remainder of the movement having been played on 16 ft. and 8 ft. diapasons only.[1] Bach could not himself have produced this effect, for the organs of his day had not the mechanism for it; but I am certain he would have appreciated it: it is in the same manner as the sudden *fortissimo* shout for the chorus on a discord, at the word "Barabbas" in the *Passion-musik*.

[1] For the benefit of the "inorganic" reader it may be mentioned that the diapasons are the foundation stops of the organ, an 8 ft. stop sounding the same note as written, a 16 ft. stop sounding an octave lower than written. The combination of the two produces the effect desirable for a composition of this kind—weight of tone without *noise*. (See Chapter IX.)

Reference was made a little way back to the Toccatas for the organ, and a word may be given to this class of composition, and to one example of them in particular. A Toccata (Italian *toccare*, to touch) was apparently originally a short movement to try an instrument with, or to form a kind of exercise for touch. In the hands of Bach it is expanded, in the case of the Toccata in F, into the most colossal organ prelude in existence, though still preserving the character properly belonging to a Toccata—a composition consisting of passages in which neatness, equality, and precision of touch are especially required. It commences with a kind of duet in canon for the two hands, on a drone bass—



This leads to a pedal solo carrying on the same figure, and coming, at the end of the second page, to a full close on the dominant, after which the duet and the pedal solo are repeated in the key of the dominant, the solo this time at more extent and with a wider range. The effect of this

pedal solo is splendid on a powerful organ, though it is futile enough on a small one; but the whole of these four pages are nothing but an introduction to the real business of the piece—a prelude within a prelude. The remainder consists of two main elements: the following remarkably bold figure—



which is repeated in various keys and positions, and a secondary subject of less bold character, which three times intervenes, and for which the power of the organ ought to be reduced, though it is but too common to hear players pound mechanically through the whole thing with the full power of the organ.[1] The introduction of this secondary subject is preceded each time by a passage of extraordinary force and grandeur—a kind of *coda* at the close of each presentation of the principal subject, and which reappears

[1] As a real artist in organ-playing observed to me: "They pull out all the stops, and then *just wallow in it.*"

at the close of the movement with modulations which (as Mendelssohn said after playing it on a mere small village church-organ) "sound as if they would bring the church down." It is worth while to quote the passage referred to by Mendelssohn as "bringing the church down"; the reader bearing in mind that he should imagine it as given with the full power and weight of the largest class of organ—









Observe also the bold point, so characteristic of Bach, at * in the last bar but one; the full chord of F in the hands against the B flat of the pedal, which disdains to interrupt its march to fall in with the conventional $\frac{6}{4}$ chord common to that position; an effect addressed to the intellect rather than to the ear.[1]

This great work may be paired off with the Doric Fugue as representing the highest type of Bach's organ-music, and is unquestionably one of the greatest works in the whole range of instrumental music. The other Toccatas of importance are that which forms the prelude to the Doric Fugue, and which is as grand in style as the F Toccata, though not nearly so colossal in scale; and the more popular one in D minor, the most modern in style and *genre* of all Bach's organ-works, and with a great deal more of pianoforte fashion about its passages than most of them; which fact apparently tempted Tausig to arrange or derange it for the piano in a manner which showed at once his own cleverness and his want of reverence for the master. It is not so objectionable as Liszt's arrangements of the fugues, because there is the excuse, as observed, of a certain pianoforte character about the work as a whole, though it would be difficult to say how such an organ effect as this—

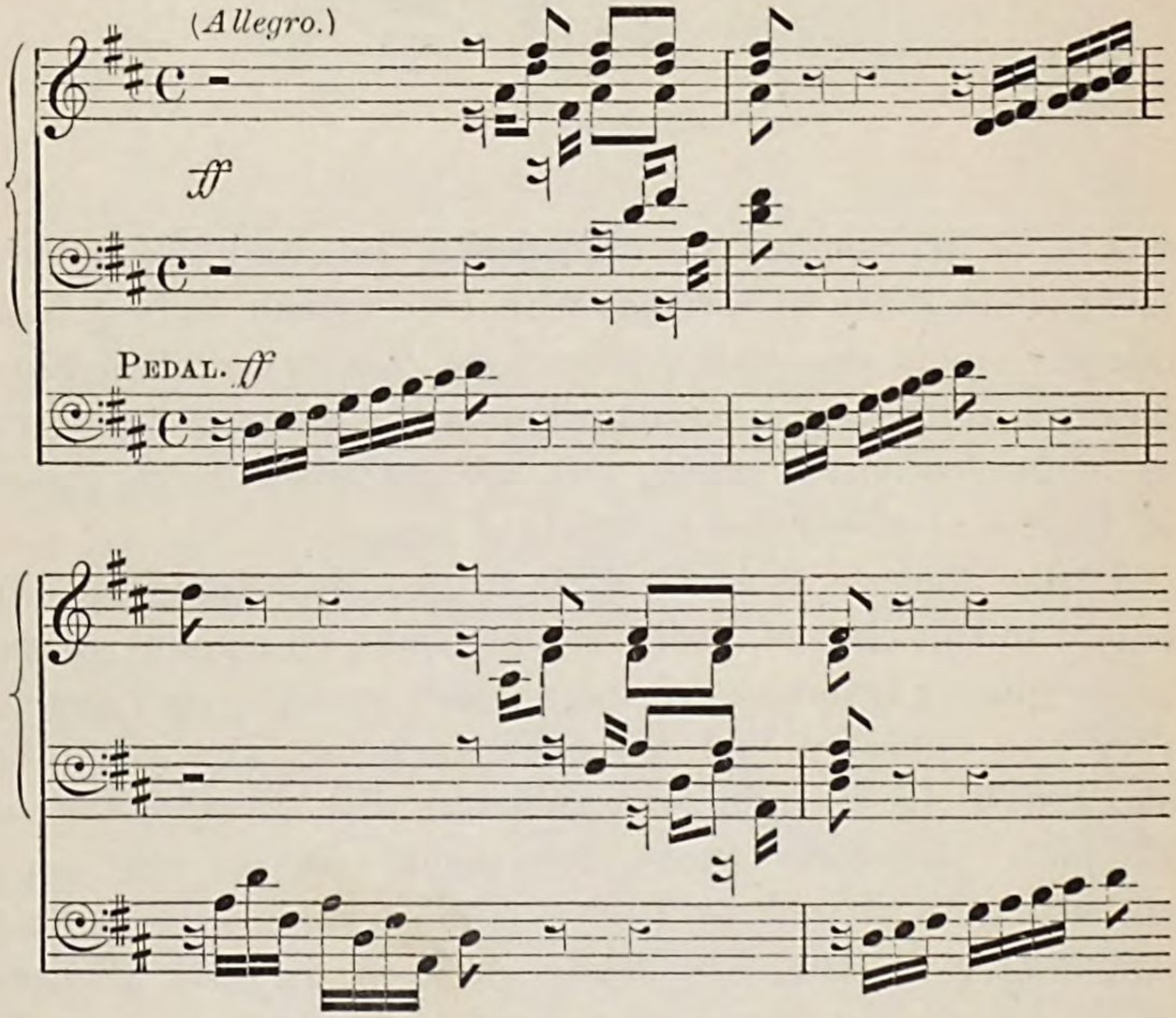
[1] Some modern theorists, perhaps, would parse this passage in a different manner; but that is the way Bach regarded it.



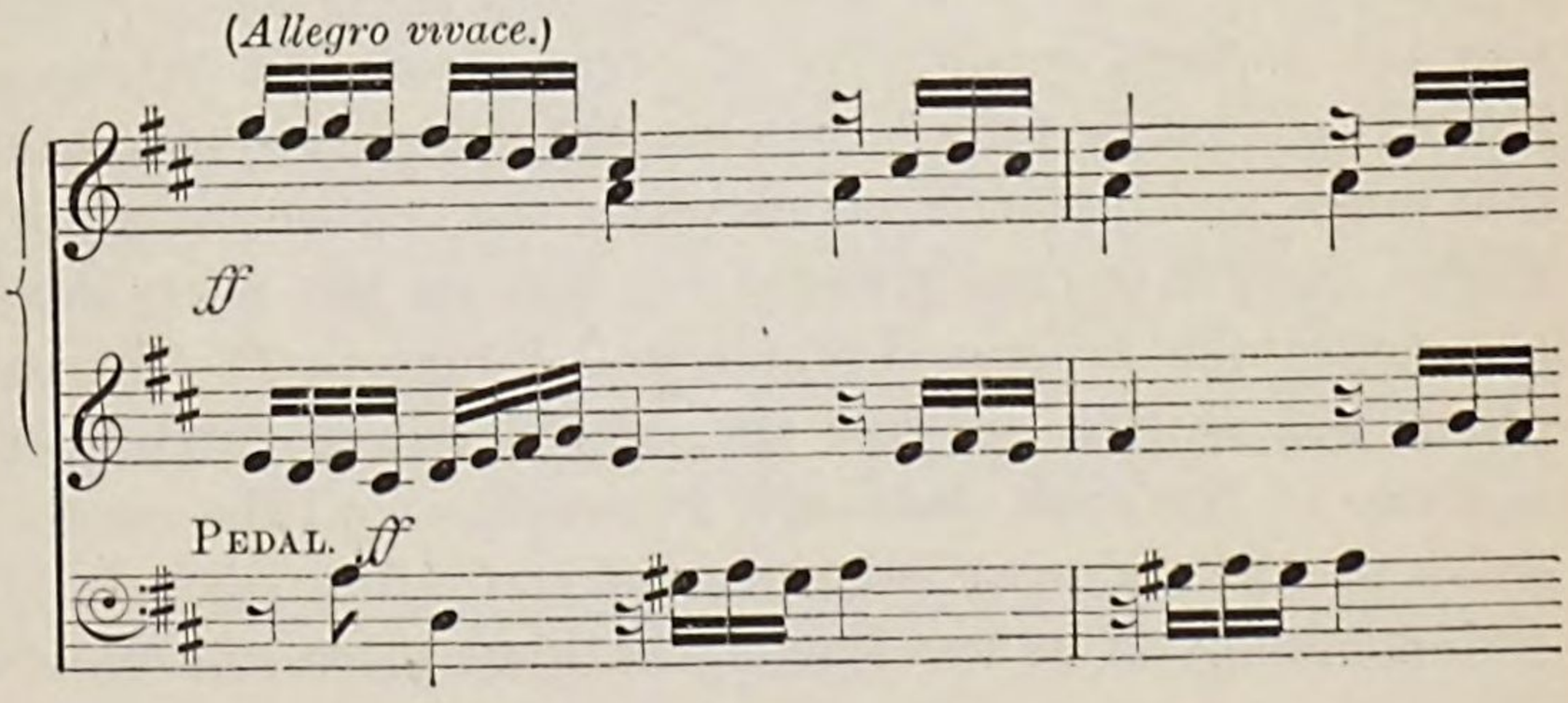
was to be represented on the piano. In short, the experiment is one quite at variance with true artistic feeling; nor can any one in the least realize from this clever adaptation, however brilliantly executed, what is the effect of the work as performed on the organ, with its immensely larger range in degrees of power and contrasts of tone.

I have thought it worth while to go a little into detail in regard to this class of Bach's compositions, on account of the extraordinary ignorance of them which prevails even among very well educated and advanced amateurs, who would be shocked to be thought unacquainted with Beethoven's or Chopin's pianoforte works, but would receive the same accusation in regard to Bach's organ works with perfect equanimity. Spitta, as already observed, is fully alive to their general importance; but his critical views on them, in detail, must be taken *cum grano.* He does not sufficiently distinguish between the higher and the lower class of these works; between those which are merely brilliant and effective show-pieces for the instrument, and those which represent the highest capabilities of organ-music. It is due to him to say that he fully recognizes the artistic importance of that grave and pathetic composition, the "little E minor" Fugue, more than once referred to; but, on the other hand, he classes the *bravura* Prelude and Fugue in D (the one which was written to take the conceit out of Buxtehude) as "one of the most dazzlingly beautiful of all the master's organ works"; a most fallacious and misleading dictum. It is undoubtedly in its way one of the most successful *bravura*

pieces ever written: the first bars of the prelude, with the tumultuous scales and arpeggios for the pedals, at once proclaim its character for brilliancy and effectiveness—



and there are passages of startling effect in the fugue, especially that which leads to the final resumption of the subject—





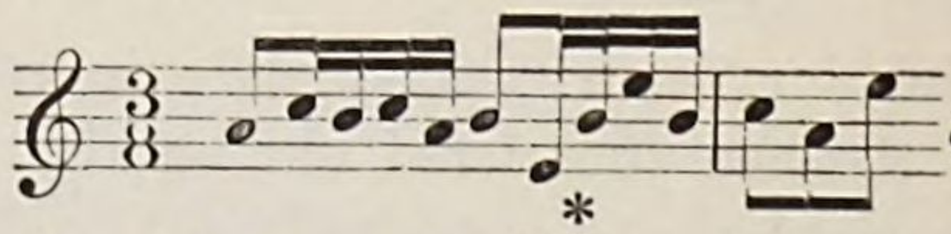
a great part of the effect of which arises really from the scale of the instrument on which it is played; the phrase



in the bass, for instance, might be considered a mere commonplace in pianoforte music, but its effect when thundered out on the pedal of a large organ is astonishing, and must be heard to be appreciated. With all this effectiveness, however, one cannot but perceive that such a composition stands on a far lower artistic level than the "Doric" or B minor Fugues, or the Toccata in F (not to mention others); that the subject of the fugue, though excellent for its purpose, is really only a piece of school *fioriture*; and on the whole, I think the best and most discriminating criticism I ever heard on it was that of a worthy cathedral organist of the old school: "Ah! Bach was young when he did that."

Before quitting the subject, a word may be said as to the

few indications which exist in regard to Bach's method of playing his own organ-music. What little evidence there is goes entirely against the too common theory and practice of the purists of modern organ-playing—that these are pieces to be solemnly and religiously pounded through without any attempt at variation or contrast of effect; a method (or absence of method) which has probably done much to foster the popular notion of the special dullness of organ fugues. From hints in his organ-specifications, it is obvious that Bach was constantly on the look-out for new, striking, and even what might be called piquant effects, and that if he had lived in the present day he would have availed himself of every means furnished by modern mechanism for increasing the variety of effect and contrast in his organ music. Several indications occur, also, that he was noted for the rapidity with which he played his own compositions—those of the more brilliant order of course. An internal testimony to this occurs in the A minor Fugue, the subject of which, if played fast, would present a difficult position in the pedal part. Accordingly, wherever the theme enters on the pedal, it is slightly simplified, by the omission of one note, to get rid of this impediment to speed; the opening phrase for the manual standing thus—



where the group marked with an asterisk would, on the cumbersome and wide-spaced pedal-boards of the old German organs, have necessitated a crossing over of the left foot to strike the upper E, awkward in fast time; accordingly, on the pedal the phrase appears—



so as to avoid the crossing of the feet, and leave no impediment to the easy execution of the passage in a fast *tempo*. This bit of evidence is conclusive against the "Goodman Dull" of modern organ-playing, who would rob Bach's com-

positions of all their rightful claim to brilliancy, spirit, and *élan.*

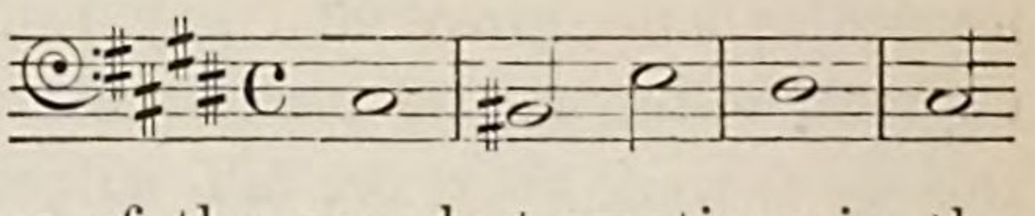
Next to the organ fugues, the *Wohltemperirte Klavier,* more commonly known in England as the "Forty-eight Preludes and Fugues," is unquestionably the most important of Bach's instrumental works, though it does not present that degree of brilliancy of musical effect which characterizes the organ-works. Here, again, our theory holds good as to the important effect of publicity on the artist; for this was a work written not for the public ear, but for the private study of the master's more advanced pupils. The book consisted originally only of the first twenty-four pieces, to which alone the characteristic title was at first applied, implying that the clavier must be tuned on "equal temperament" principles, so that all keys could be used upon it with the same effect; for one of the points in which Bach was in advance of his day was in his insistance on this principle of tuning keyed instruments, in opposition to the old system of unequal temperament, in which the false tuning, unavoidable (for reasons mentioned in Chapter I.) on instruments with fixed tones, was all thrown into keys which were supposed to be less used than the others, instead of being divided equally among all the keys. This very controversy, again, is an instance of the predominating effect of the organ over the course of musical art in Bach's time, since it is especially on the organ, with its sustained sounds, that these imperfections of tuning become disagreeably felt; and on the "unequal" system such keys as A flat become on the organ almost unbearable in their falsity, the note which has to do double duty as either A flat or G sharp being tuned to an almost correct G sharp, leaving the third between A flat and C, in the key of A flat, so stilted and harsh as to be an absolute deformity to the ear. This work, then, to illustrate practically the fact that all keys are equally required by the true musician, was also designed to afford to Bach's more advanced pupils the opportunity or necessity of becoming equally at home in the read-

ing and fingering of every key; and either from its practical success as a means of education, or from the composer's interest in the experiment, it was followed up by a second set of twenty-four similar compositions, again ranging through all the keys, the two sets together making now the complete volume known as "The Forty-Eight." This, then, was a series of pieces written simply as lessons, with apparently no thought of publication, and probably little idea on the part of the composer that he was producing a work which was to be a model and study for musicians at all future times, and one of the special delights of all the great composers who succeeded him. Yet we find, even after all the great changes and apparent advance in the mechanism of pianoforte playing in modern days, great pianists still declaring that no such training for the mastery of the key-board, from the student's point of view, is furnished by any one work. The testimony has come from those whose art apparently ran in the most widely different grooves: from such players as Thalberg, who, though he had not the depth of artistic seriousness to appreciate the musical worth and expression of these compositions, declared that he knew no study like them for forming a player; from Chopin, whose preparation for the playing of his own works in public was, according to his own account, to shut himself up and play Bach's fugues. But even this technical importance is secondary to the musical interest of a great part of the work. In this respect certainly it varies; it has its dry and matter-of-fact pages, with something of the *rococo* element, though these are not many. But it is a most wonderful example of the distinction, which has been hinted at above in reference to a critical remark of Spitta's about the organ fugues, between composing original music, original motives and melodies and expression, in a certain form, and the mere elaboration of the form for the form's sake. Bach has stamped the fugue form with his imprimatur, and many poor, dry, uninteresting fugues have been written because he

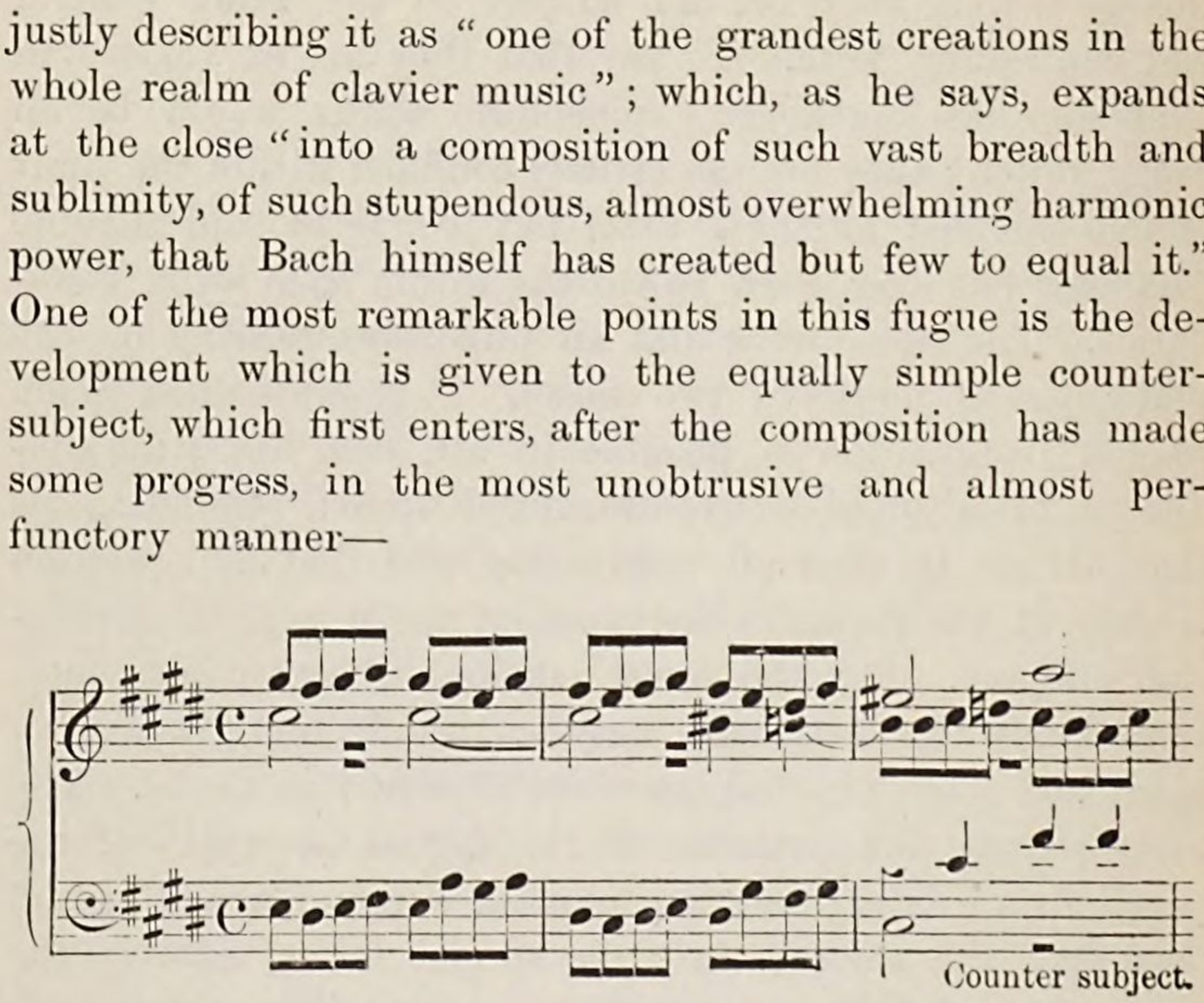
wrote so many fine and interesting ones; the minor prophets thinking to prophesy merely by putting on, in a ritual fashion, the mantle of the great prophet. But, in fact, a large proportion of these exercises of Bach's are so many musical poems, grave and gay, full of variety of detail and expression, having no greater likeness or repetition than in the fact that they are all subject to the same general and controlling form. To say that they are as various in expression as Beethoven's pianoforte works would be an exaggeration; they are too strictly confined within the limit of one adopted form for that; but it may be said that no composer has ever been so various within such strict boundaries. The whole work has an important bearing on the philosophy of music in two senses. It shows us how much play of imagination is possible in art, even under the conditions of a highly-conventionalized form; reminding us that all art is, after all, convention, and that the question is only of the logical observance of the degree of convention adopted. But the finest portions illustrate also most remarkably the distinction between intellectual grandeur of spirit and mere physical grandeur of sound in music. The most serious and pathetic of the fugues are types of the parallelism existing between musical expression and human thought; the themes, in their special forms, exhibit the expression of feeling by differences of pitch, reduced to artistic form; while the working out of the subject in harmony and counterpoint is the reflection in music of what logic is in thought; it is, in fact, a form of logic, for what renders the progression of parts and harmonies interesting to us is their relation to a harmonic law, and the perception which we have of the constructive power displayed in marshalling these various voices of the fugue so that they shall appear to move quite freely, while always preserving a logical harmonic relation to each other—

> "most regular, when most
> Irregular they seem."

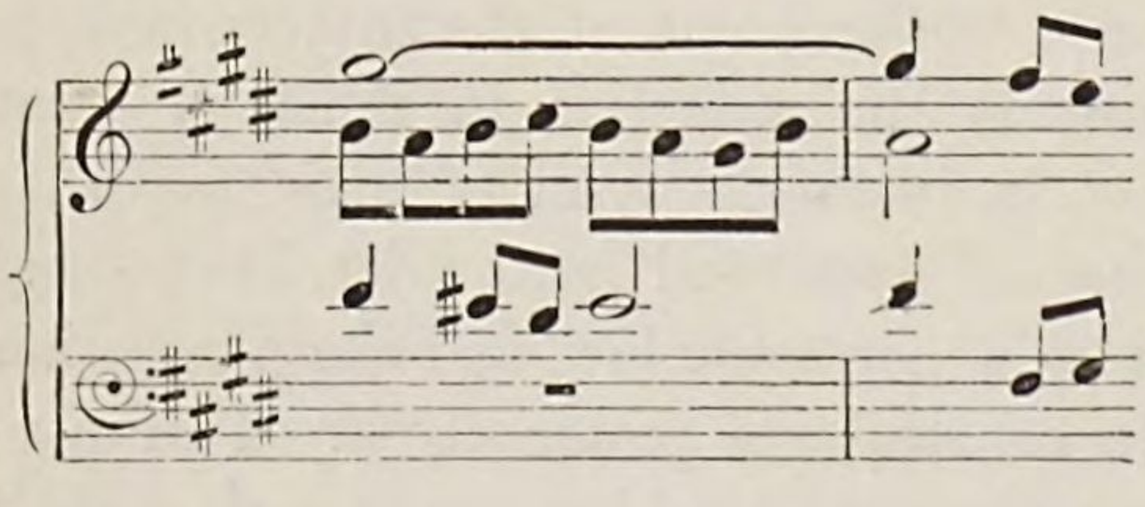
But the appeal in music of this class is to the intellect rather than to the mere physical or nervous pleasure of the ear. Dr. Spitta selects for special mention one example, the Fugue in C sharp minor in the first set, on the apparently rather dry and simple subject—



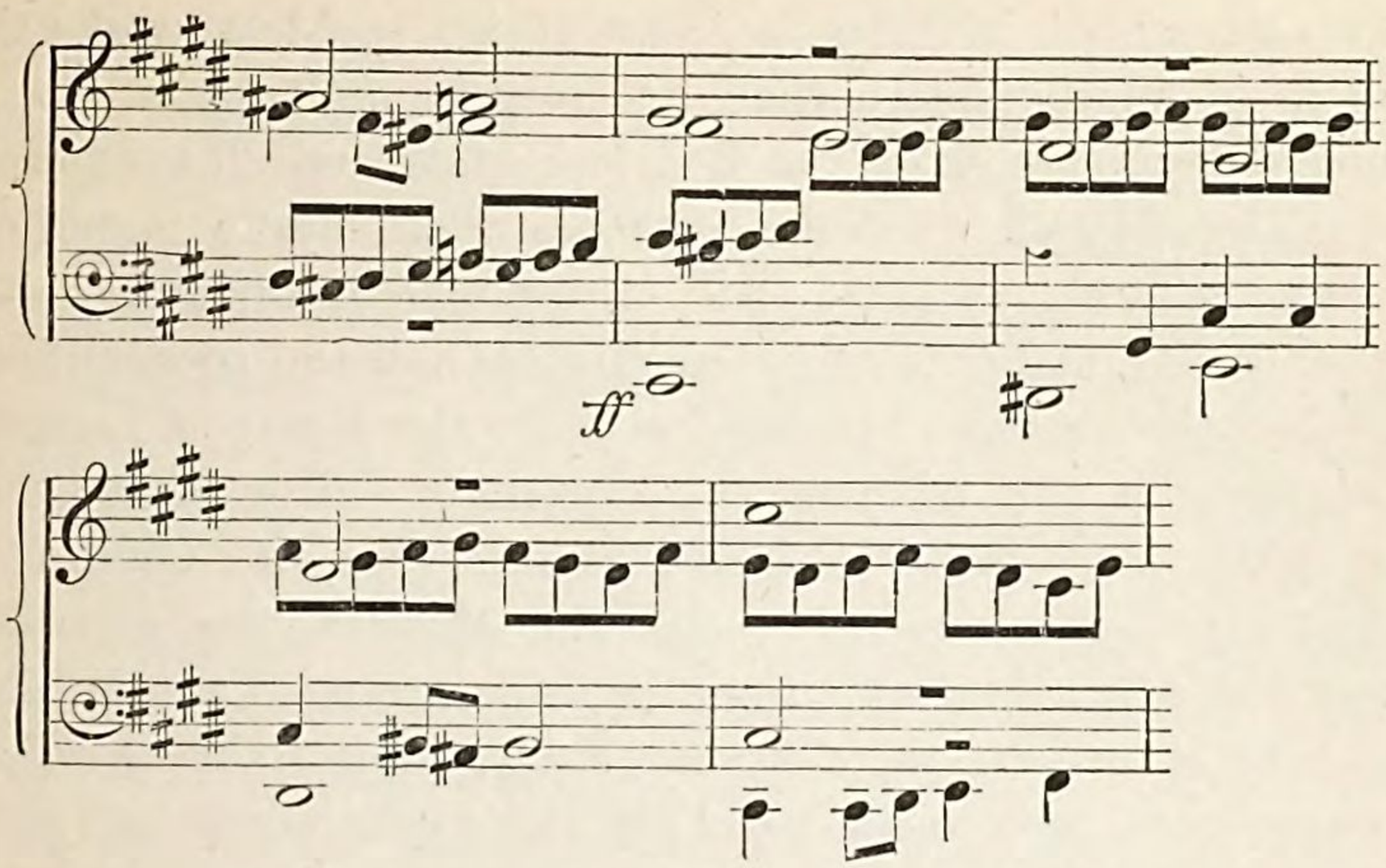
justly describing it as "one of the grandest creations in the whole realm of clavier music"; which, as he says, expands at the close "into a composition of such vast breadth and sublimity, of such stupendous, almost overwhelming harmonic power, that Bach himself has created but few to equal it." One of the most remarkable points in this fugue is the development which is given to the equally simple counter-subject, which first enters, after the composition has made some progress, in the most unobtrusive and almost perfunctory manner—



Counter subject.



the hearer little suspecting what is to come of it, or what fires are to break from it, before the close of the composition. The unexpected entry of the principal subject on the low C sharp, too, about the middle of the fugue—



is another magnificent point, than which nothing more striking or more dramatically effective is to be found even in the pianoforte works of Beethoven. To my fancy this wonderful fugue has always seemed like the musical reflection of some great appeal in oratory—commencing with the almost cold, unimpassioned statement of the case; gradually crowding argument upon argument, apostrophe upon apostrophe, till in the fervour of passion logic itself rises into rhetoric, and we are swept along to the climax by a torrent of burning words. And for what was Bach content to write this sublime composition? For the old "clavier," an instrument weaker in tone and volume than an ordinary cottage piano of the present day! There is not in all music a more remarkable example of the disproportion we sometimes find between the greatness of the musical idea and the feebleness of the means employed to give voice to it; an example how critically instructive in comparison with the ways of the Spontinis and the Wagners of music, the school of composers who can do nothing without an immense orchestra, and who achieve sublimity by dressing up small ideas in a resplendent panoply of instrumentation.

At present, in London at all events, Bach's choral music,

as represented in three or four of his greatest works, is more familiarly known than his instrumental music. It is not many years since the B minor Mass and *The Passion* were to English amateurs no more than mystic names of works believed to exist, but of unheard-of difficulty and ponderosity, and outside of the range of musical possibilities. Now it has become the fashion to do the Matthew Passion whenever it can be managed, especially during Lent; the B minor Mass is to be heard at intervals, the *Christmas Oratorio* more frequently; and the Motetts, the separate parts of which Mozart on one occasion arranged round him on chairs and on the floor for study, in the absence of a score, have been made vocal by the Leslie Choir and the Bach Choir. In regard to these latter it may be observed, in passing, that Dr. Spitta strongly condemns the theory that they are to be regarded or performed as unaccompanied vocal music; he insists that they were intended to be accompanied on the organ, not only from internal evidence, but from what he states as ascertained historic fact, that they were usually preceded by an organ prelude, in which case it certainly cannot be supposed that the organ was dropped as soon as the voices commenced. I beg to draw attention to this point for the consideration of the conductors of choral societies.

Of those greater choral works which have now emerged from their obscurity and become portions of the events of our musical year, it is very difficult to speak in a few words, so important are the questions in regard to music and musical expression which their form and feeling suggest. In regard to the enthusiastic admiration which the Mass in B minor excited when first made practically known to us through the admirable efforts of the Bach Choir, something must of course be allowed for the feeling of intense interest and excitement which always centres round what may be called a revival of anything great in art which has lain forgotten or unrecognized during previous generations. Various influences combine to render a Renaissance always a time of

exaggerated estimates; the novelty of the discovery, which gives keener zest to our enjoyment, combines with a feeling of self-appreciation that we, we alone, were the generation reserved to unearth and to do justice to the long-hidden treasure. Making all allowance for these special influences, it must be said that the B minor Mass, as a choral work and taken apart from the solos, justifies the feeling which was aroused and expressed when its long silence was broken and it became an audible experience to the ears of this generation of hearers. The weight and momentum of the choruses, and the intense fervour of their style, impress one with an idea of colossal power and deep earnestness of purpose such as no other choral work in existence conveys in the same degree. That there is a certain want of relief, of light and shade, in the work as a whole, probably must also be felt even by some of those who are unwilling to acknowledge it to themselves; it must be felt also that there is no expression in it of that peculiar mingling of aspiration with tenderness which has been the charm, to so many ardent souls, of Catholic devotion and Catholic ritual: the words are those of the Mass, of the *magnum mysterium*, but the music is that of the Lutheran organist.

Thus, in the contemplation of the composer's greatest choral work, we are at once brought face to face with the fact that Bach, in the setting of words to music, had no dramatizing instinct, none of that power of going out of himself and becoming the mouthpiece of this and that phase of human feeling, of touching the various chords of the wild and eager human heart, which gives such multiple and ever-changing interest to the works of Handel and Beethoven. It may be argued that he intentionally grasped at the experiment of adapting to the text of the Mass the musical spirit of Lutheranism; but the critical comparison of his choral works generally leads to the conclusion that his range of choral expression was restricted, though both grand and impassioned within its own limits.

If we take the choruses in various works—the *Christmas Oratorio*, the *Magnificat*, and the various Cantatas—we find ourselves in the presence of a mass of fine powerful part-writing, but we seem to meet with a great deal of the same expression and effect in each composition; the subjects of the choruses, indeed, all differ, but they have not that sharp distinction, that marked individuality, which causes each one of Handel's principal choruses to retain its separate hold on the ear of the memory as a distinct expression of feeling. The great choruses of the St. Matthew Passion are filled with more of the fire of inspiration, more of dramatic character, than those of any other of Bach's works: the sublime lamentation for three choirs, which opens the work; the thunder and lightning chorus, and the tender and pathetic dirge at the close—these are indeed great pieces of musical expression, in which we can forget the elaborate construction in sympathy with the deep feeling of the music. But it is not often that Bach allows us thus to forget the musical craftsman in his choruses, and hear only the musical poet; and on this account we can hardly regard Bach's choral works as of equal value with those wonderfully varied utterances of the other great master, who could give to the Christian Hallelujah and the pagan hymn of revelry, to the voluptuous serenade or the chorus of drinking soldiery, to the song of triumph of the Hebrews over their oppressors or the dance before Ammon's god "about the furnace blue," each its complete and perfectly distinct dramatic expression.

But when we come from choruses to writing for solo voices, all excuse for comparison between Bach and his great contemporary disappears. He is simply nowhere, as a song-writer, in comparison with Handel; and one reason for this, apart from actual temperament and genius, is to be found in that very quality which Dr. Spitta refers to, as above-mentioned, as the 'native and pithy originality" of the Bach family, which showed itself partly in their neglect of any

foreign musical culture. Neither Sebastian Bach nor any of his tribe ever thought it necessary to go to Italy to supplement their home studies; and Dr. Spitta evidently rather approves of this omission, as in favour of the retention of a pure and unadulterated national style. This notion of a national style is one of the fallacies of criticism. For what does it really imply? An essentially national style means shortcoming, not fullness. It means that a composer has remained bound, through want of more extended study, to the special idiosyncrasies of the art of his own country. The fact is, that some study of vocal music in Italy was exactly what Bach needed, and what Handel benefited immensely from. Born in a country where vocal music and vocal execution have never been so well understood as instrumental, and with a style derived entirely in the first instance from instrumental music, Bach never acquired the faculty of writing pure and spontaneous melodies in a purely vocal style. There are not more than one or two airs by him, exceptional among his vocal solos, which fix themselves in the ear and heart, as so many of the songs of Handel and Mozart do. His vocal style is mannered to a degree, and the manner is not a good one, from a vocal point of view; for it is obviously derived from the organ and harpsichord style of ornament and expression. In those keyed instruments, which were incapable of any expression from diminishing or swelling or in any way modulating the force of a sustained note (for the contrivance called the "swell" in a modern organ had no existence then), special expression was sought for by breaking up a note into a group of little detached notes, in the shape of trills and twitterings; and this unsatisfactory and often unmeaning method, arising out of the effort to make organ and harpsichord express what they were unfitted to express, is duly transferred by Bach to his vocal solos, which are full of this aimless twittering, to the exclusion of the nobler and more expressive forms of pure and flowing vocal melody. In studying this portion of Bach's music, in fact,

one cannot help thinking of Veit Bach and his cithara, and detecting the lingering trace of rusticity, of *bourgeois* feeling, in the work of his great descendant. There is a want of elevation of feeling, of dignity of style, in his songs. There is not one example to be found of such dignified, and, if one may use the expression, high-minded pathos as we find in such airs as "Return, O God," and "Ye sons of Israel," in *Samson*. Bach's pathos, in his songs of prayer and repentance, is of a weak, sentimental, sometimes, we might even say, of a querulous order. Taking his songs *en masse*, we recognize no doubt a seriousness of intention, and a carefulness of finish in the style adopted, more equable than that which pervaded the songs of Handel, who frequently threw himself away, and wrote *currente calamo* for this or that singer. But if there is a more general level maintained, it is a much more dead level. We seem to come to the same kind of passages over and over again; the melodies want distinctive character and unity; the constant use of the minor seventh of the scale becomes at last an almost irritating mannerism. The accompaniments are, no doubt, much fuller and more elaborate in design than those of Handel, almost invariably presenting a different and contrasting design from that of the voice part, or forming a counterpoint to it. But we can seldom get rid of the feeling of a want of buoyancy in the music, as if its wings were clogged. The accompaniments are scientifically interesting, musically complete, but where is there anything like the fire and picturesqueness of that wonderful accompaniment to "Thou shalt break them," in *The Messiah*, not to mention others? Any one who could seriously regard the songs in *The Passion* or the *Christmas Oratorio* as comparable to those in *The Messiah* and other oratorios of Handel's, must have taken leave of his critical faculty, or never come into it.

The comparison between the two great contemporary composers is almost inevitable; and Dr. Spitta himself furnishes the excuse for it, if any be needed, for he frequently touches

on the subject, more especially in one very characteristic passage which is worth quoting. Handel, he observes,

"with a genius which, if more comprehensive, was far less profoundly laborious, never stood in so intimate a connection with the organ-music of his time, that essentially German branch of his art; and the way in which he afterwards made it subserve his grand and pregnant artistic ideal, the oratorio, demanded not so much profound treatment as breadth and brilliancy. The outward circumstances answer to this. Handel arrives at Hamburg in the bright midsummer days, in the gay society of Mattheson, and in obedience to an invitation from the President of the Council; he enjoys an affable welcome and festivities in his honour. Bach comes on foot in the dull autumn weather from Thuringia, following his own instinct, and perhaps not knowing one single soul that might look for his arriving."

This contrast certainly typifies, curiously enough, the contrast between their genius and their work in the field of art. The one was the strong and successful man, living before the world—

"The very child of over-joyousness,"

taking all life as his province; the other was the sober, conscientious and laborious student, working for his own ideal alone, in a more restrained though more complete method. But, however we may feel more reverence, in a sense, for the latter, is not art mainly for the joy of life, and is it not the strong and joyous poet, seeing, like Shakespeare, all sides of human feeling, who gives the greater gift to the world?

To sum up: it may be said that a comprehensive and impartial survey of Bach's genius and works favours the conclusion that the old view of him, as essentially a great instrumental composer, was not so far wrong as it has recently been thought to be. It is in this realm that he is supreme, and that the contrast with his great compeer is almost entirely in his favour. While a great deal of Handel's instrumental music is now faded and *passé* in style, the smallest minuet by Bach contains matter for study, and exhibits qualities of construction and expression which can never lose their value to musicians or to intelligent hearers;

the exception being only, as already noted, in some of those *chorale* preludes which are connected with a form of religious expression in music which is now obsolete. As a vocal composer, his works remain a monument of astonishing power, of rock-like stability, of sometimes poignant expression of religious yearning, but pervaded by a certain monotony of style and character, which is perhaps truly expressive of the one pervading subject, the religious life, which is at the centre of them all. He is the subjective composer; Handel the objective artist. He is the musician of the student; Handel the poet of the people. Neither can be spared; nor perhaps is it to much purpose, after all, to dispute which of the two be most valuable in the world of art—a matter in regard to which even individual feeling will vary with individual mood or circumstance. What is important is that each should be correctly appreciated, and placed on his own honoured pedestal in the musical Pantheon.

CHAPTER IV.

MOZART.

THE position held by Mozart among the great musical composers is one of peculiar interest, whether we regard his genius and his productions from the historical or the critical point of view. Historically speaking, he stands as a connecting link between the old and the modern schools of musical art; between the school in which the working out of a tonal construction in purely logical and rounded form constituted the paramount aim and interest of the composer, and that in which the effort at emotional expression and poetic suggestiveness predominate more or less over considerations of purity and balance of form. Not, of course, that either of these sources of interest can be absent from anything worth calling music. Balance of form, not excluding emotional expression, is represented by the great composers of the pre-Mozartian period; poetic expression, not indifferent to form, is represented by the best of the modern school. In Mozart the two tendencies seem to overlap. He was almost as great a contrapuntal constructor as Bach; perhaps quite as great, if artistic greatness lie in the production of clear effect through intricate combination, rather than in the mere intricacy of the combination itself. He is full of reminiscences of the older style, reminiscences embodying some of its finest characteristics. But he is also full of innovations suggestive of the feeling of the coming

modern school. His melody breathes a romantic tenderness of expression, of which there had been no instance before in music; his harmonic changes and his effects of instrumentation give the first hints of the broad style and rich effects which were to be perfected by Beethoven, and in many details of his composition he anticipated some of the favourite devices of Beethoven. But from the purely critical point of view, Mozart's genius presents a still more interesting and suggestive aspect. For he is in music the typical representative of that balanced and complete artistic power, which leaves scarcely any room for criticism in regard to conception and execution, yet concerning which there may ever and anon intrude itself that almost irritating question, dealt with in Browning's *Andrea del Sarto*, Is this rounded perfection and artistic balance of parts, this perfect and harmonious whole so completely grasped by the artist—is this the best fulfilment of what we wish from art? or is it rather true that "a man's reach should exceed his grasp," that the art which in its very striving after higher and intenser expression bursts the swathements of symmetrical form, and loses in the process its roundness and completeness, is thereby intellectually the loftier through that very incompleteness? About no question concerning artistic form and expression have there been more oscillations of criticism than this, the answer to which depends after all so much on the mental constitution of different men and different generations, even on the changes of mood in the same mind. Consequently, in these days of the making of criticisms, no great composer has aroused such varied shades of opinion, short of absolute antagonism, as Mozart. A high place in the art none would be prejudiced enough to deny him, but in this concession alone are all agreed. It was for a long time a creed of amateurs that Mozart was the greatest of musical composers; a creed accepted rather by faith than understanding. It is asserted by some musical prophets that he was only a man supremely clever, playing on the surface of his art, and missing its spiritual meaning.

The question is of wider interest than immediately appears, for it concerns, not only what we think about Mozart, but (by implication) what we think about music.

In Jahn's *Life of Mozart*, a book which for literary merit and breadth of view stands almost alone among musical biographies, and is indeed rather an æsthetic treatise on the life and times of Mozart than a mere biography, the biographer leaves his readers in no doubt as to the interest which the subject excited in his own mind. While laboriously occupied for weeks at Salzburg in copying out Mozart's letters, he could fancy himself, he says, in intercourse with the man himself as he lived his life again letter by letter; could realize the emotions of joy and sorrow which had prompted his words, and even the variations in the handwriting grew to have their own significance. "It is my most earnest wish," he adds, "that some breath of this feeling may have passed into my own performance, but it would scarcely be possible to reproduce the inspiration which contact with the letters awoke in myself." This vivid interest excited by the letters and memorials of Mozart, to which Jahn alludes, is characteristic of the kind of spell exercised over us by the records of a nature not great or serious in the highest sense, but so human, so kindly, so full of genial enjoyment of life—

"An abridgment of all that is pleasant in man:"

a character typified not more in his letters than in the portraits which have preserved for us his vivacious countenance, in which good-humour is blent with a lurking satirical power. And the same characteristics strike us in the musical life of which he was the centre. No too importunate demands for the reasons and the philosophy of the art disturbed its enjoyment. Sterndale Bennett's remark, after listening to something of Mozart's: "Ah! music was young then!" comes across one's mind again and again in turning over these records of a time when there was no critical "Warum?" lying in wait for the composer; when counter-

point was still a pure joy to the craftsman ; when symphonies might be written in two or three days, or an overture or sonata turned out the evening before an announced performance, with no idea of an object beyond the frank delight in beauty of melody and finish of form and execution ; with no demand from the audience for a meaning to the work, and (thank heaven !) no one to flourish the showman's pointer through the pages of a *programme raisonné.* "Fresh woods and pastures new" spread then before the minstrel. Music, which had been hitherto principally concerned with realizing clear logical form and scientific tonal construction, and insisting upon thoroughly sound and adequate execution on the part of vocalists, was now to find in the development of instrumental composition a new direction for study, a new source of effect. Tonal colouring was to overlay and diversify tonal form ; the timid and tentative instrumental execution of the time was to be stimulated and directed ; a more tender and voluptuous expression was to be breathed into melody, the branch of musical utterance which is most directly influenced by varieties of emotional temperament, whether of race or of generation. Haydn may catch sight of the promised land, though too late to profit much by the discovery : "I have but just learned how to use the wind instruments, and now I must die." Dr. Burney, learned musician, and shrewd, though courteous, English gentleman, takes to perambulating Germany with a note-book, when Mozart was sixteen years old, his childhood of exhibition over, and he, no longer a prodigy, somewhat under the shadow of Salzburg provincialism. Burney is quite at home about singing ; his house in London had been the resort of all the great Italian singers of the day, and he can criticize *ex cathedrâ* the French singers, to whom he devotes a variation of a couplet of Dryden's—

> "Sound passed through them no longer is the same,
> As food digested takes a different name."

But his notes on instrumental music reveal to us the naked-

ness of that part of the land, and the first feeling about for the sources of instrumental expression. He remarks on the comparatively expressive playing of a child who, contrary to custom, had learned on the clavichord only, not on the hard and mechanical harpsichord—the first hint of the revolution the pianoforte was to work. He mentions with interest the effectiveness, in one place, of a passage in which the band played the first chord of each phrase louder than the rest (what would now be called a *sforzando*), and in speaking of the Mannheim orchestra he mentions their introduction of the *crescendo* and *diminuendo*, and here too "the *piano* (which was before chiefly used as an echo, with which it was generally synonymous), as well as the *forte*, were found to be musical colours, which had their shades as well as red and blue in painting." What a light this throws on the gulf between the ancient and modern modes of musical expression; what a field was left for the development of instrumental effect, when these tentative attempts at contrast of tone could so attract a musician of Burney's experience as to seem worthy of special comment and record!

It is not worth while to dwell here on the extraordinary records of Mozart's precocity in music, which are familiar to most people who have taken any interest in the history of the art. Extreme precocity of this kind has occasionally been displayed without being followed by any corresponding development of genius in more mature life;[1] and the fact that proficiency in *technique* has not unfrequently been exhibited both by painters and musicians at an age when the intellectual scope and meaning of their art could hardly have been grasped at all, is very suggestive in regard to the dual nature of those forms of imaginative expression

[1] Our English composer, Dr. Crotch, is an example. The stories told of his achievements at the age of four, if not so numerous, are nearly as extraordinary as anything that is related of Mozart; but, though some of his compositions are very beautiful, he never made his own style or developed sufficient individuality to remove him from the crowd of second-rate composers whose works hardly outlive their own age.

which involve great technical skill, in contemplating which we are drawn, according to our mood or temperament, sometimes towards one element in the art, sometimes towards the other; now disposed to think with Voltaire that a difficulty overcome is always something, now disposed to share George Sand's indignant repudiation of such a view of art. That this precocity in *technique* is indicative not so much of the degree as of the nature of the genius of its possessor is obvious in comparing Mozart with Beethoven. No such stories are told of the childhood of Beethoven, who conquered by hard and in one sense unwilling study that power of technical construction in counterpoint which he turned to such splendid account in the contrapuntal episodes which at once relieve and intensify (by contrast) the passionate expression of many of his greatest movements. But it is only in these episodes that Beethoven shows to advantage as a constructor in the stricter forms of composition; his longer essays in fugue are knotty, rugged, deficient in balance and continuity, when compared with similar productions by Bach, Handel, and Mozart. What young Beethoven acquired with difficulty and in a spirit of rebellion, Mozart seems, for anything that appears to the contrary, to have possessed intuitively, or, at least, to have acquired by a process of assimilation as natural in his case as that by which children learn to talk. That he studied hard in one sense all his life, there can be no question; that is, he examined the scores of all other composers of note, and was acquainted with all that had been done in the art down to his own time; but he always spoke as slightingly as did Beethoven of theory-books and exercises; and his remark when he heard Bach's motetts, "That is something from which one can learn," seems to imply that in general he was not conscious of having learned much from other composers. His early power over musical construction foreshadowed the career of a composer who has surpassed any other of the great composers in the faculty of combining science with effect, of doing difficult things as if

they were easy, and who always handled his materials as if he could do just what he liked with them. It is worth notice that as a child he displayed also a passion for and great aptitude in arithmetic, which for a time almost pushed music on one side; not the only instance in which the metaphysical relation between harmony and numerical proportion has been illustrated by the union of a quick perception of both sciences in the same person. But this constructive intuition would not necessarily have given us Mozart; it might only have resulted, as far as music was concerned, in another Albrechtsberger.

The mere account of the musical feats of the young Mozart derives, however, some additional interest and significance from the spirit and impulse under which they were done. We recognize not only the presence of extraordinary musical gifts, but a quality of eager ambition and self-reliance, in the manner in which he flew at every sort of musical game so soon as it was presented to him; in his childish attempt at a concerto, so difficult (for that date) that his father said no one could play it; in the readiness and courage with which, the first time the pedal-board of an organ was shown and explained to him, he immediately would try it, and preluded standing on the pedals (on alternate feet it must be presumed), his legs being too short to reach them from the seat. This kind of pluck, which he displayed throughout his life in his readiness on emergencies, is the more noteworthy in a child so delicately organized that the sound of a trumpet loudly blown caused him physical pain and prostration almost to fainting. But the traits of moral and mental character which come out in the records of Mozart's childish and boyish years are of even more interest than those which illustrate his musical faculty, and are not without relation, either, to his future achievements. In the gay, witty, observant letters which he wrote to his sister and others during his Italian tour (at the age of thirteen and fourteen) we can trace that perception of humour and character which in after years was

so conspicuous in *Figaro* and *Don Giovanni.* But the moral aspect of the child's character, amid the influences to which it was subject, is really touchingly beautiful ; there has seldom been a nature, surely, more sweet and healthful than his, sent upon this earth. That a child who at his earliest years (after mere infancy) was literally turned into a travelling exhibition, was prematurely famous, *fêted*, caressed, raved about, kissed and dandled by empresses and queens, should have preserved, not only during his childhood, but during his boyhood also, whilst the same kind of spoiling process was going on, the most perfect artlessness and freshness of child-like manners, remaining entirely free from vanity and affectation, perfectly simple and unconventional in his feelings and behaviour, is certainly a very unusual evidence of a naturally charming and healthy disposition; all the more so since it is evident that the boy, with all his high spirits and fun, already showed that sense of the dignity of his art, and of the respect due to him as an artist, which remained with him throughout life, under, not infrequently, very trying circumstances. This sweet and simple character stands out the more by contrast with that of his father, a personage about whom there are some popular ideas to be set right. Holmes, in his *Life of Mozart,* speaks with great respect of Leopold Mozart, and in Nohl's foolish and sentimental biography he is described as a worthy man who lived to see his one aim in life accomplished—the recognition of his son as the leading composer of the age. Yet both biographers, as well as Jahn[1], give us ample materials for the conclusion that Leopold Mozart was a mean soul—a typical specimen of paltry, narrow-minded respectability of the most vulgar class ; sour-tempered, pious, prudish, and time-serving. He began life as "valet-musician" to the amiable Archbishop of Salzburg, and the valet and the musician seem to have been equally mixed in his nature. He did his best to ruin the

[1] Jahn mostly avoids any comments on Leopold Mozart ; he contents himself with pulling the string and exhibiting the motions of the puppet.

character of his gifted child by making his boyhood a period of exhibition for his own glory and profit; allowing him to please idiots by showing how he could play just as well with the key-board covered with a cloth; advertising his feats in the style of a circus-master, not forgetting to ascribe all to "the glory of God," who had thus performed a miracle at Salzburg which, as he endeavoured to persuade the Archbishop in one letter, would, if properly worked, tend to the suppression of Grimm, Voltaire, and other profane persons who did not believe in miracles. When young Mozart was grossly insulted by a Court lackey with a title (Count Arco), it was his father who persuaded him to submit to the insult like a servant rather than resent it with the spirit of a gentleman, as the son seemed dangerously disposed to do; when Mozart became engaged to a girl whom he honestly loved, but who was poor, it was his father who urged him to jilt her, and snubbed her after their marriage; though he warned his son, certainly, that "it depends entirely on yourself whether, infatuated with some pretty face, you one day breathe your last on a straw sack, your wife and children in a state of starvation; or, after a well-spent Christian life, die peacefully in honour and independence, and your family well-provided for." This can only be paralleled by Partridge's contrast between being killed next day in battle, and dying in your bed "a great many years hence, like a good Christian." But enough of this moral and musical hobby-horse, about whom posterity need never have been troubled, had he not been the father of his son.

We get many side lights on art and character, and the society of the times, from the numerous letters of Mozart's maturer years, with which all his biographies are diversified. What strikes one in reading the letters that are most directly concerned with musical topics, is the constant impression we receive of the youth and freshness of the art of instrumental music at that period. No one had then thought of calling in question the existing forms of music;

there was no doubt that the object of music was to give pleasure, no question that the extempore conduct of a fugue on a given subject, and in a strictly logical form, was one of the highest achievements and enjoyments possible to the musician and his hearers. Indeed, there is something quite contagious in the account of the healthy delight which Mozart himself seems to have taken in his intellectual exhibitions of this kind, while at the same time kindling even more vivacious appreciation in his listeners. Over and over again we come on the same kind of picture—the musician surrounded by a circle of excited hearers, giving vent to their delight and astonishment in various unconventional ways; Mozart himself, in the midst of all the concentration of the musical half of his nature upon his extempore composition, always cool and self-possessed enough to notice his hearers and describe their demeanour afterwards. At a musical party at Augsburg, after he had played a violin sonata, some one had heard of Mozart's playing on the organ a few days before, and he was asked to play "in the organ style." This meant of course, fugues. Some one present gave him a subject:—

"I played upon it in a jocose style, and in the middle (the fugue was in G minor) began in the major, but still playfully and in the same *tempo;* then came the subject reversed; and at last the thought struck me of giving a sportive character to the theme of the fugue. I did not stop long considering, but did it at once, and it went as accurately as if cut out with a razor."

No wonder that "the dean was beside himself with pleasure." Then came a difficult fugued sonata, which was to be played at sight, after a little deprecation on the part of Mozart, followed by the performance in such a style as to evoke from the irrepressible dean such expressions as "rogue," "conjuror," &c. In the same letter we have the account of a concert where Mozart, having played with two others his concerto for three pianos, added a sonata and another concerto:—

"Then again a strict fugue in C minor; then a magnificent sonata in C major out of my head, and finished with a rondo. There was a pro-

digious hubbub and noise. Stein did nothing but make faces and grimaces of astonishment, and Demler laughed continually. This last is quite a curious man ; when anything pleases him he laughs immoderately. He almost began to swear at me."

At Mannheim, again, he plays the organ during mass, "for amusement"; to say truth the music seems to have quite got the better of the worship :—

"I was in my best humour. There is always a voluntary here in the place of the 'Benedictus,' so I took a phrase from the 'Sanctus' and fugued upon it. There they all stood making faces"—

"they" being the players in the chapel band. Mozart's frank description in these letters has not a touch of vanity about it; nothing but the pleasant consciousness of power, and a desire that those dear to him should share in his enjoyment and his triumph. As to the abstract value to be attached to such exhibitions of spontaneous mastery over the most difficult and exacting forms of musical composition, readers in the present day will be less unanimous than Mozart's contemporaries. Extempore playing is now almost entirely at a discount, whether as the result of a decline in musical constructive power, or whether owing to the modern view of the objects and scope of music, which assumes the necessity of a poetic basis or *raison d'être* for a composition, and therefore almost precludes the idea of music produced off-hand and to order. The feeling of Mendelssohn on this point is more than once expressed in his letters ; where he complains, for example, of people insisting on his extemporising after a supper-party, when he was sure he 'had nothing in his head but benches and cold fowl." But if the stricter forms of composition are out of vogue, and have given place to more purely emotional music, and if the science displayed by Mozart in his extempore fugues and fantasias might now be thought a less important musical element than it then was, this does not in the least detract from the intellectual brilliancy of his achievements; the conditions of the art as then understood may or may not have been the highest

and best, but the readiness, insight, and concentration necessary for the extempore handling of musical form under those conditions, cannot from any point of view be called in question. As to the Mendelssohn criticism about extempore playing (which is quite in the modern spirit), it is at least a fair question whether the higher capability or the higher genius is manifested by a musician who can only produce anything worth hearing when he is "in the mood" and under suggestive circumstances, or by one who is always in the mood, and has sufficient wealth of ideas to draw upon always at the shortest notice and on the slightest hint. My own feeling, however, is that there is no question in the matter at all, and that the certainty and readiness with which Mozart could produce his best music (as it appears he could), whenever and wherever called upon, afford evidence of a richer and more robust genius than we detect in the fastidious sensitiveness of Mendelssohn. Beethoven, who is looked upon as the originator of the poetic basis school of music, was almost as ready and as independent of circumstances in regard to extemporising as Mozart; the bass part of a quartet, "tossed upside down on the desk of the piano," was enough on one memorable occasion to give him the hint for a performance which caused his popular rival to leave the room, and avoid ever meeting him again where they could be brought into competition. While on the subject of pianoforte playing, it may be observed that the playing of both Mozart and Beethoven was remarked upon by their contemporaries for the unusual strength and brilliancy of the left hand, and that both composers have left evidence of the importance they attached to a good style of manipulation on the instrument. Mozart's references to the mechanical defects and clumsiness of some of the players of his day are frequent and characteristically satirical.

But while we have abundant evidence of Mozart's views as to musical execution, that intermediate art whereby the conception of the composer is brought within range of the

sensuous perception of the hearer, the far more interesting question as to his views about the art of music in itself, the ideal which should form the basis of it, and the method of composition, receives no illustrations from his writings or recorded remarks, save in some vague hints, few and far between. One single remark recorded of Haydn, if it be true (I cannot recall the authority for it), that in composing his quartetts he was accustomed to diversify their design by imagining to himself the various incidents of an excursion or some such proceeding in real life, gives more insight into the process of intellectual formation of a composition than Mozart ever vouchsafed. Such a remark indicates intelligibly enough the manner in which variety and contrast of real incident may find its reflection, in the mind of the composer, in variety and contrast of tonal incident; a phenomenon of which there are several acknowledged instances, and probably many more unacknowledged, in the works of Beethoven. But in regard to Mozart's music, considered apart from words, we are not furnished with even any such general hint as would be implied in Haydn's remark above referred to. Nowhere in his correspondence about his own compositions, and his playing, and the effects produced, is there a hint about the *raison d'être* of any composition or of the form which it assumed. He is as abstract and impersonal as *Andrea del Sarto*—

> " I, painting from myself and to myself,
> Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame,
> Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
> Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,
> His hue mistaken; what of that? or else,
> Rightly traced and well ordered; what of that?
> Speak as they please, what does the mountain care?"

What, then, was Mozart's object in instrumental composition? We get a hint of one side of it from the records already referred to as to his extraordinary power of extempore construction. To a musician to whom it was an easy matter

to play his own part in a new concerted composition without having ever written it down (a feat performed by him more than once with perfect *naïveté* and absence of pretence), or while he was writing out a fugue previously conceived, to compose simultaneously in his mind a prelude in perfectly different form—to one who handled his art thus it is evident that musical *form*, for its own sake, must have been a paramount interest; composition was a form of design, in which successions and proportions of sounds took the place of successions and proportions of lines and spaces. Not less was he engrossed by the pure joy of constructive power. The combination of sounds as music is more or less conditioned by physical laws; how far the conditions are rigorous is matter for an essay in itself; there was tacit conviction on the subject in the time of Mozart, who as to detail bowed indeed nominally to no dicta of musical theorists, but did not "deny their major"; *sunt certi denique fines.* How to move with ease and a sense of controlling power, then, within these limits? to handle the most complicated combinations of melodies as if the weaving of such a tonal structure were the most natural effort of the will? There was some pleasure in that, for the sense of power means pleasure.

"On one occasion, at the house of Madame Niclas, he was asked to improvise something. Readily, as his custom was, he complied, and seated himself at the piano, having just been provided with two themes by the musicians who were present. Madame Niclas stood near his chair to watch him playing. Mozart, who loved a joke with her, looked up and said, 'Come, have not you a theme on your mind for me too? She sang him one, and he began a most charming fantasia, now on the one subject, now on the other, ending by bringing them all three together, to the intense delight and amazement of all who were present."[1]

When we compare with this account what is said on other testimony as to the "inexhaustible *wit*" of Mozart's extempore playing, we can imagine what an exciting kind of per-

[1] Quoted by Jahn from Semper, Madame Niclas's brother. Madame Niclas was a vocalist of the day.

formance this was; but we are as far as ever from learning the secret of the exquisite charm of expression, the emotional power in many of his compositions. It was his favourite occupation to sit at the piano extemporising fantasias, either alone or with one or two chosen hearers; and if the well known Fantasia in C minor be, as it probably is, a type of the kind of thing he produced on these occasions, we can imagine what passionate outpourings of emotional expression some of these extempore effusions may have been. But of the feelings which should be the fountain of such musical expressions we hardly find a trace in Mozart's outward life and character. The gaiety and wit were in his life; the sadness, and longing, and tenderness came out only in his music. Almost the one trait in Jahn's pages which hints at a deep emotional element in his character is the interesting story of his extemporising, when quite a child, a song on the word *perfido*, "which excited him so much that he struck the clavier like one possessed, and several times sprang up from his seat." There is nothing in the calm, equable development of his mature genius corresponding at all to this trait. His emotions, as expressed in music, were always under the shaping and controlling influence of artistic power. Haydn, indeed, has testified that "he could never forget Mozart's playing—it came from the heart;" and his hearers noticed that when seated at the clavier he became another man, his expression serious and abstracted, his whole manner altered. But we have nothing in his life and in his expressed feelings to account for the deeper qualities of expression in his music; for the pathos of the G minor Symphony, the exquisite sentiment of the slow movement of the E flat Symphony. Whatever was the groundwork of the emotion thus expressed, it came out in his art alone.

In his operas, in which the poetic basis of the music is furnished by the words and situations, there is, of course, less difficulty in estimating Mozart's feeling and interest as

expressed in the music. Their main characteristic, besides the pure emotional beauty of melody, of which they are full, lies in the presence of very marked and delicate character-painting, which is nevertheless subordinated for the most part to the demands of a perfectly consistent and coherent musical form. No one can doubt, in reading Jahn's biography, that the dramatic interest was exceedingly strong in Mozart from an early age. His quick sense of humour, his appreciation of special foibles of character in individuals, and his power of lively satire thereupon, come out in his correspondence continually, and we have glimpses of his figure as an accomplished actor in the personation of characters in drawing-room comedy. But the realization of this power in his principal operas goes far beyond all which the suggestions of it in his every-day life would have led us to expect. For the plot and situations he was mainly indebted to the "poet," but for everything beyond them we are indebted entirely to Mozart. The skeleton characters of the conventional librettist are clothed, by Mozart's musical treatment of them, with the full outline and endowed with the warm pulsations of living and breathing human beings, men and women of like passions with ourselves; nor does any mood seem to be beyond the range of the composer's appreciation. He can give expression to the love or the grief of the high-born lady, the coquetry of the waiting-maid, the artlessness of the country girl. The polished sensuality of the libertine gentleman, the humours of his good-for-nothing valet, the ill-temper of a sulky old Court official, each receive from Mozart their appropriate and entirely individual musical expression. In this respect it is not too much to say that there is what may be called a certain Shakespearean power in Mozart. It is, in effect, as if he said to us, "This is how these characters would express themselves if music were their natural language;" and the more we hear and compare their various utterances, the more we must feel convinced of the composer's clear and vivid perception of the

varieties of human character. This is exhibited notably in his musical colouring of the almost epicene character of Cherubino, the amorous boy-page with the timidity and bashfulness of a woman. In a character of such marked and unusual type, he was, of course, rather more indebted to the poet's original conception than in the case of the more ordinary types, but even thus the music of Cherubino's part is a remarkable instance of subtlety of expression; and Jahn throws an additional light on this by his mention of the treatment of the part of Polidoro in *La Finta Semplice*, written at the age of twelve: "The *naïve* emotion of a youth who is as yet unconscious of the strength of his own passion is so naturally and heartily expressed, that we may well ask how the boy had acquired such a degree of psychological insight." The dignity and elevation of feeling, again, with which Mozart invests the love music of a high-minded lady, of a Donna Anna or a Countess, is not less remarkable in its way; and the truth and reality of Mozart's pathos, as exhibited through such characters, has been commented on by John Stuart Mill, who contrasts the feeling expressed in the Countess's airs in *Figaro*, the genuine outpouring of the heart in solitude, with what he terms the "garrulous pathos" of Rossini, a pathos which is manifestly conscious of the listeners, and acts to them. The new form which the treatment of the orchestra in opera took in his hands cannot be better put than in Jahn's own words:—

> "It (the orchestra) is no longer a mere adjunct to the vocal parts, but takes its share in the effective working of the whole, filling out details which the vocal parts leave imperfect, and obeying not so much the requirements of the vocalist as the conditions of artistic perfection. This altered relationship required an altered organization; each component part of the orchestra must have a distinct existence, so that each, according to its place and kind, might contribute to the general effect. The single example of the treatment of the basses will serve to make this clear. Hitherto the basses had served merely as the foundation of the melody, indispensable indeed, but often clumsy and insignificant; but here, without losing their character as the groundwork of harmonic

elaboration, they have an independent movement ; they serve not only to support the superincumbent mass, but their quickening power sets in motion and gives the impulse to its formation."

All that need be added to this is, that Mozart, alone among the great operatic composers, has been able to preserve precisely the balance between the vocal and the orchestral portion of the work ; to weave the orchestra into the whole design, and give individual expression to various instruments, without hampering and over-weighting the singers. Even in Beethoven's one exquisite opera the balance is sometimes lost, the singers too much enmeshed in the elaborations of the accompaniment ; and in much of recent German opera the balance is so entirely lost that the result is really an orchestral composition, with explanatory comments by the singers.

There is a great deal to interest one, at a time when the *rationale* of stage music is being so much discussed, in the accounts of the preparation of Mozart's first two operas of importance, *Idomeneo* and *Il Seraglio*, more especially in his own letters on the subject. The long letter to his father in regard to the production of the latter opera at Vienna is a curious mixture of really thoughtful criticism, sometimes very modern in tone, with an easy content, in regard to other points, with things as they were. The versification of the libretto, he says, "is none of the best, but it so luckily fell in with some of the musical ideas that were wandering about in my head, that it could not but please me, ... and I know that in an opera the poetry must be the obedient daughter of the music."

"Why do the Italian comic operas please universally, notwithstanding their miserable *libretti ?* Because the music is supreme, and everything is forgotten for it. So much the more, therefore, must an opera please of which the plan is well contrived and the words wholly written for the music, and not for the satisfaction of a miserable rhyme, which in a theatrical representation only does mischief. . . . . Verse is indeed indispensable to music, but rhyme, on account of the rhyming, most injurious," &c.

Here he is at all events more consistent than Wagner, who,

while claiming the exemption of the music from the bonds of rhythm, has absolutely emphasized the rhythm in the words of his operas by the introduction of a prominent jingle of doggerel rhyme. Another passage in the same letter is so full of musical good sense, and so generally applicable, that it is worth while to quote it. He has been speaking of the air for Osmin, in which the singer's anger is supposed to be continually increasing towards the close of the piece :—

"The audience will fancy, as the man's anger goes on increasing, that this must be the end of the air; but the *allegro assai*, in another time and key, will just then produce an excellent effect; for, as a man in such a towering passion outsteps all the boundaries of order and moderation, and wholly loses himself in the excess of his feelings, so also must the music. As, however, the passions, whether violent or otherwise, must never be expressed to disgust, and music, even in the most terrific situations, never give pain to the ear, *but always delight the ear and remain music*, I have chosen no very distant key to F, the key of the air; though not the nearest related, D minor, yet the next in succession A minor."

This passage is an enunciation of general principle in regard to musical expression, as true and as well worth bearing in mind as Hamlet's celebrated speech to the players in regard to passionate action. Its application to much that is produced as music just at present it is hardly necessary to point out.

Other circumstances in connection with the production of some of his operas are vividly characteristic of the musical and social conditions of the times. In regard to *Idomeneo*, a work somewhat *passé* now, it is interesting nevertheless to notice into what a state of excitement the production of the new opera threw the connoisseurs and musicians; in regard to the latter we have one graphic expression from Mozart himself which seems to bring the scene before us at once—how, coming back with his friend Cannabich from the first rehearsal, Madame Cannabich met him at the door and embraced him with delight, and then, he adds, "Ramm (oboe)

and Lange (horn) came in *half crazy*," an expression which gives a very real idea of the delight which the members of the orchestra seem to have taken in Mozart's accompaniments, a kind of freshness of enjoyment in the art which hardly seems to be represented in these days, when music is philosophized over with such exceedingly long words and long faces. Amusing, too, is the composer's description of his difficulties with his motley but mostly well-meaning group of singers on this occasion; how the first tenor could not have an air in one scene, because "it is to thunder, and that will never be heard if Raff sings," and how he had to teach his "molto amato castrato Del Prato" the whole opera through, &c. *Le Nozze de Figaro*, which as regards finish and complete balance of style is even a more perfect work, in one sense, than *Don Giovanni*, seems to have been a suggestion of the Emperor Joseph; and in the story, adapted from Beaumarchais, Mozart had the advantage of a book giving him situations and contrasts of character involving a great deal of real and piquant humour, very suggestive to a composer who had himself such an eye for the humorous side of life. In regard to the production of this opera, Holmes quotes a characteristic incident at rehearsal, related by Kelly, a clever young Englishman who was then gyrating as a satellite around Mozart:—

"I remember Mozart was on the stage, with his crimson pelisse and gold-laced cocked hat, giving the time of the music to the orchestra. Figaro's song 'Non piu andrai farfallone amoroso,' Benucci gave with the greatest animation and power of voice. I was standing close to Mozart, who *sotto voce* was repeating, 'Bravo! Bravo, Benucci!' and when Benucci came to the fine passage 'Cherubino, alla vittoria, alla gloria militar,' which he gave out with stentorian lungs, the effect was electricity itself; for the whole of the performers on the stage and those on the orchestra, as if actuated by one feeling of delight, vociferated 'Bravo, bravo maestro! viva, viva grande Mozart!' Those in the orchestra, I thought, would never have ceased applauding by beating the bows of their violins against the music-desks. The little man acknowledged, by repeated obeisances, his thanks for the distinguished mark of applause bestowed upon him."

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It may be very foolish, but I confess I can never read this little incident, though familiar to me from boyhood, without a certain thrill of excitement. What a piquant little bit of theatre history it is, and how graphically told! How we realise Mozart's personality as the little man in the cocked hat, and sympathise with the outburst of enthusiasm at the close! Why, asks the philosophical critic, who believes dramatic music to have a Mission (with a large M), should we attach any importance to a mere piece of mock bravado, sung by a butler to the page and the lady's-maid? Why, it may be answered, should we read over and over again with fresh enjoyment the talk and jokes of some careless revellers in a tavern? Because, when transmitted to us by Shakespeare, we find they represent in perfection one side of human character, in the shape of humour which we feel to be typical of its kind, and completely true to nature and to the special persons and scenes represented; and what is true to human nature and character always retains its hold on our interest. Mozart in this admirable scene has realised the perfection of humour, of that best and most subtle type of which it may be said that we hardly know whether to regard it as jest or earnest; whether to be inspired by the martial strain of the march movement at the close of Figaro's air, or to laugh at the oddly-assorted trio as they march off to the measure of the tune. As a master of comedy Mozart stands in some parts of this opera almost on a level with Shakespeare, and even as Falstaff and Prince Hal fill a larger place in our literature than Milton's archangels, so we may predict that Mozart's butler and page and waiting-maid will outlast Wagner's gods and goddesses, and even the singing dragon.

Don Giovanni, which will always remain the greatest and most typical effort of Mozart's dramatic genius, arose, like so many great works, almost out of an accident. The success of *Figaro* at Prague, and the *furore* excited there by the presence and the pianoforte performances of the composer in that town, led him one day to say to the manager of the

theatre there that as the Bohemians understood him so well, he really thought he ought to write an opera on purpose for them. The manager wisely booked him on the spot, and he had recourse to the eccentric poet Da Ponte, who had fabricated the libretto of *Figaro*, and who hit upon the old story of the libertine and the avenging statue, which seems to have seized on Mozart's fancy with the same fascination which it has had for so many thousands in so many generations. The stern Beethoven, indeed, called it a scandalous subject, degrading to the art of music; but few will agree with him as to the subject in itself, whatever we may think of Da Ponte's libretto in detail. It originally, indeed, professed to be an opera with a moral purpose—its sub-title was *Il Dissoluto punito*, perhaps a kind of sop to the more serious section of the public. But apart from the moral and the avenging statue, there is something in the figure of the reckless and daring libertine with which one cannot but sympathise; and it is worth while, in contrast with Beethoven's view of the subject (which may, it is true, have been expressed only in one of his "moods"), to notice the way in which it impressed two such opposite men of intellect as Dr. Strauss and De Musset: the former has left on record the interest with which this opera always impressed him, as the spectacle of the ruin of a human character "through the misuse of the most beautiful impulse of our nature"; the French poet, in a far wilder strain of feeling, has expressed what many will understand as to the fascination of the character, in some stanzas in his *Namouna*, a poem not *virginibus puerisque* certainly, but well worth looking at in connection with the subject.[1] The circumstances of the composition of the opera seem as oddly out of keeping with its fame as the accidental

[1] "Quant au roué français, au don Juan ordinaire,

. . . .

C'est l'ombre d'un roué que ne vaut pas Valmont.

Il en est un plus grand, plus beau, plus poétique,
Que personne n'a fait, que Mozart a rêvé,

nature of its origin. When Mozart set off for his second visit to Prague with the object of superintending the production of the new opera, not a note of the music was on paper ; and it is on record that most of it was written at his friend Dussek's, with whom he stayed, in the midst of noise and company, sometimes during games at bowls, in which the composer took his turn with the rest, and went on with his writing in the meantime. Holmes notes that the original score is written on different kinds of paper, apparently the first that came to hand. The characteristic overture, so poetically expressive of the contrasts of feeling and situation in the opera, was begun the midnight before the day of the first representation, the composer being kept awake by punch and his wife's conversation, and finishing the MS. for the copyists early the next morning. In the evening the audience were kept waiting three-quarters of an hour for the parts, and the overture was played without a rehearsal. The scrap way in which the music was written is amusingly illustrated by the story of Mozart bringing to the orchestra the drum and trumpet parts for the second *finale*, which he had written out

> Qu'Hoffmann a vu passer, au son de la musique,
> Sous un éclair divin de sa nuit fantastique,
> Admirable portrait qu'il n'a point achevé,
> Et que de notre temps Shakspeare aurait trouvé.
>
> . . . .
>
> Elles t'aimaient pourtant, ces filles insensées
> Que sur ton cœur de fer tu pressas tour à tour ;
> Le vent qui t'emportait les avait traversées ;
> Elles t'aimaient, don Juan, ces pauvres delaissées
> Qui couvraient de baisers l'ombre de ton amour,
> Qui te donnaient leur vie, et qui n'avaient qu'un jour.
>
> Mais toi, spectre énervé, toi, que faisais-tu d'elles ?
> Ah ! massacre et malheur ! tu les aimais aussi,
> Toi ! croyant toujours voir sur tes amours nouvelles
> Se lever le soleil de tes nuits éternelles,
> Te disant chaque soir, ' Peut-être le voici,'
> Et l'attendant toujours, et vieillissant ainsi ! "

Nor must we forget the heroic touch which Molière has given to his figure of Don Juan, in *Le Festin de Pierre.*

on separate pieces of paper without reference to the rest of the score, trusting to his memory, only cautioning the players to be careful at one point, as he believed there were "four bars either too few or too many." The production of the opera is not without its stage anecdotes, one among others as to the characteristic way which Mozart took of teaching the Zerlina to put life into her part; she would not scream with sufficient energy in the ball-room scene, where she is assaulted by Don Giovanni, so the composer waited behind till the right moment, and then laid hold of her so forcibly and suddenly that she shrieked in earnest, and was politely told "that was the way to do it;" a story which reminds one of Handel's autocratic dealings with his lady singers.

The production of *Die Zauberflöte* (to digress for a moment from *Don Giovanni*) furnishes a more singular contrast between cause and effect than even its predecessor. Here was the greatest musician of his day condescending to set the silliest of stories in such a manner as to satisfy the ideas of a needy and dissolute manager (Shikaneder) as to what would best fill all parts of the house, altering and re-writing whole movements to please this scaramouch, descending to something very like clap-trap to catch the gallery, and consoling himself (for that was part of the stipulation) by lavishing on certain scenes some of his grandest and noblest music. The result is a medley such as was never made by a great musician, and which seems like a mingling of church services with excerpts from a pantomime. Still more curious is the interest which Mozart seems to have taken in this ill-judged venture, and one incident, as related by himself, is too characteristic of the child-like side of his nature to be passed over. The anecdote is in a letter to his wife, where he mentions having particularly enjoyed the opera one evening from a box close to the orchestra, and then—

"I went behind the scenes when Papageno's air accompanied by bells began, feeling such a strong impulse to play the bells myself for once.

I played them a capital trick, for at Shikaneder's pause[1] I made an arpeggio; he started, looked behind the scenes, and saw me. The second time the pause came I did nothing, when he waited and would not proceed. I guessed what he wanted, and played a chord. He then struck the bells and said, 'Hold your tongue!' which made everybody laugh. I believe it was owing to this joke that many learned for the first time that Shikaneder did not play the bells himself."

There is something grotesque enough in this musical joke, the whim of a moment of high spirits, coming down to us as a bit of biographical history; and it furnishes an amusing commentary on Nohl's remark that "the strains of *Die Zauberflöte* already breathed an elevation of soul scarcely in harmony with an earthly existence. His soul was entirely absorbed by heavenly things." Poor Mozart! His too good-natured compliance with the tastes of Papageno-Shikaneder revenged itself upon him, in going far to deprive his last opera of the place which the great things in it must have insured for it on the lyric stage, had it not been weighted by scraps of inferior music and a nonsensical libretto.

It may be said that the libretto does not stand alone in deserving this epithet, which might perhaps be applied pretty safely to opera books generally, when considered in detail, at all events. But *Don Giovanni* stands on a very different footing in this respect. The characters in it are essentially human and representative of typical elements in real life: the handsome and courageous libertine; the officious servant, too cowardly to be a thorough villain; the betrayed and deserted mistress; the high-born lady and her lover; the peasant lovers, with their mixture of rustic affection for each other and respect for the great man—all these are characters which may exist and have existed; and though nothing could be more commonplace than their development in the text, Mozart's characterisation of them in music raises them to quite a different sphere, and gives to the work all the

[1] Shikaneder himself took the part of Papageno, which was specially written to fit his wishes.

importance and interest of Shakespearian drama. Then he was particularly fortunate in finding in the animated statue an element of the supernatural (so suitable to opera), which is nevertheless allied with human feeling and interest; not a dragon or fairy-tale monster we care not for, but the spirit of the murdered father who died in avenging the insult to his daughter. It is to be regretted that the commission to Mozart was for an *opera buffa*, a condition which obliged him to give more prominence to the foolery of Leporello than the subject really demanded; and it may certainly be questioned whether the "situation" at the celebrated Sestett in the second act ("Mille torbidi pensieri") is worth the magnificent music which Mozart has lavished upon it. But the intensely individualised feeling and dramatic character imparted to the music of the various personages can hardly be too highly estimated: Elvira is, perhaps, the one exception; she is not made interesting, and her air of complaint against her lot (written for the second act, but now generally transferred to the first) is too equable in style and deficient in passion—too much like a mere *air de parade*. But in the music of the other personages what life-like variety of character-painting there is; how impudent and swaggering is Leporello's first air; how mischievously impertinent that in which he recounts to Elvira the scope of Don Giovanni's amours, where the very violins in the accompaniment seem to twitch at the lady's dress to compel her attention; how fresh and artless the peasants' dance-music, and how touching and how true to nature is Zerlina's part in that now hackneyed duet with her would-be seducer, fluttering like a captured bird at the plaintive phrase "presto non son più forte." And so we might go on noticing one passage after another in which human weakness and passion and humour are expressed to the life, till we come to the famous supper scene, where the various phases of feeling are so admirably drawn together and contrasted: the gay *abandon* of the voluptuary, the grotesque humour of the valet, the upbraiding of Elvira (who, however,

is here again much weaker in expression than the other personages—she never seems to have interested the composer), the reckless defiance of Don Giovanni's final hymn (as Baudelaire would have called it) to love and wine, and then the ghastly shadow which the coming spectre throws before him, so to speak, over the scene, the moment of flight and confusion, followed by the tremendous voice of the avenger and the conflict of will between him and his victim. This is without doubt the greatest page in operatic music, and its effect is the more remarkable in that it is not produced by the employment of an immense orchestra and a great noise, but by the grand and terror-striking element inherent in the music itself. One can hardly imagine that this scene can ever grow old or cease to thrill the listener; and be it observed once more that all the emphatic character-painting which gives the interest to the opera is Mozart's, and his alone; the mere bald outline and commonplace language of the libretto would be nothing, would leave us perfectly cold; it is Mozart who warms it into life, and puts colour and passion and humour into it by his musical expression. Even the foolery of Leporello in the earlier part of the scene has its value in giving that sharp sense of contrast in which Shakespeare was such a master, and the effect of the conflict between Don Giovanni and the statue is immensely enhanced by that one trembling, hurried exclamation of the valet, "dite di nò, dite di nò," the tenor of which is so admirably expressed in the very notes to which it is set. The more we think of all the varied human feeling portrayed in the work, the more astonished we must be that the man who was capable of all this should ever have been set down as a mere maker of "tone-play." The mere artistic perfection of the workmanship, musically speaking, renders it even in that respect a phenomenon in art, and justifies the enthusiastic language of Gounod: "Le partition de *Don Juan* a exercé sur toute ma vie l'influence d'une révélation; elle a été, elle est restée pour moi une sorte d'incarnation de l'impeccabilité dramatique et

musicale: je le tiens pour une œuvre sans tache, d'une perfection sans intermittence;" while in regard to its painting of human character, one cannot but acknowledge the truth of Nohl's remark that in this respect Mozart shared with some of the world's great poets "those keen perceptions that penetrate to the ground work of life" ("jener Blick, der auf den Grund des Lebens schaut").[1]

Mozart's latest and unfinished work, the *Requiem*, however,

[1] This is about the only good remark I have stumbled on in Nohl's curious performance. Why this weak book should have been translated into English, when we had a much better life (Holmes's) already in our language, it would be difficult to say; why Nohl should have written it he tells us, with more candour than he was himself aware of, in his preface, which amounts to saying, almost in so many words, that he was dissatisfied with Jahn for presenting only a correct life of Mozart in regard to facts, and that we wanted one with some sentiment in it; so he set about to use Jahn's facts as a basis for his own sentiment. Certainly one seldom finds a book which provokes one so often to the utterance of that brief criticism on "sentiments" which forms the parting salute to Joseph Surface on his final exit. The musical blunders of the translation are astounding. Mozart's most popular symphony is described as the "Symphony in E sharp" (not a clerical error, for it is repeated twice); and in another place we find reference to the "Quartett in D sharp," which is the translator's way of giving "D dur" (D major). Even better than this is the translation of Sarti's sarcasm about the Quartett in C, where Sarti is made to say that "Only a pianist could be so ignorant as not to know the difference between D sharp and E sharp," which is not only nonsense in itself, but misses the very point of the sarcasm, which the translator evidently did not understand. What Sarti really said was that "it was only a pianist who would confound D sharp with E flat" ("Der *dis* und *es* nicht zu unterscheiden wisse"); the implied taunt being that Mozart, as a piano player, took his ideas of harmony from the keyboard, where D sharp and E flat are represented by the same key, and not from the theory of music, in which they are different both in harmonic relation and in actual pitch. Sarti's apostrophe, which is given in the same paragraph, "Could any one do more to cause music to sound discordant?" is again absurd; what he said was, "Could any one do more to put the players out of tune?" in which there is special reference to the difficulty of correct intonation in playing such a passage: Nohl gives the sentence correctly. It might hardly be worth while to record these fatuities of translation but for the fact that the lady who was guilty of them was for some time the popular and accepted translator, in this country, of musical letters and biographies; and it may be as well for English publishers to take note that, for the adequate translation of works on music, a knowledge of the rudiments of music is desirable, as well as a knowledge of languages.

alone gives us the full measure of the depth and intensity of pathos in musical expression of which his genius was capable. In regard to the extraordinary history of this the biographies previous to Jahn's are all at fault; even Nohl, who wrote later, almost entirely ignores the known facts, and Holmes's strong admiration for the work seems to have led him to underrate the weight even of that testimony which was then accessible. This is not strange, since facts which have long been familiar to the musical world of Germany are still ignored and overlooked in England, where the *Requiem* is performed without note or comment to indicate its real history,[1] and believed in with that unquestioning faith so characteristic of the English habit of mind in these matters, which dislikes the trouble of being disturbed in, or forced to reconsider the grounds of, its worship of any favourite idol. Those who care to follow out the whole of this curious history can now easily do so by procuring Dr. Pole's little book, *The Story of Mozart's Requiem*, the result of much careful and painstaking investigation, the conclusions from which are given in the most logical and clear manner, and embody perhaps the most extraordinary story ever heard of in connection with a musical composition, and one which really has all the interest of a romance. Most people have heard of the strange, and, as Mozart thought, mysterious manner in which the commission for the *Requiem* was given to him by a messenger from an unknown person concerning whom he was forbidden to inquire—a circumstance which naturally made a sinister impression on the mind of the composer, ill in health and harassed as he was at the time. Probably comparatively few English readers, however, are aware even now of the prosaic

[1] A protest may also be entered here against the continued republication of a certain popular work as "Mozart's *Twelfth Mass*," though it has long been known that there is no external evidence to connect it with Mozart, and very strong internal evidence against the authorship of music mostly so shallow and unworthy of him. The fugue, "Cum Sancto Spiritu," is indeed a fine and effective vocal fugue, whoever wrote it; but that is just the part the "amateurs" of the *Twelfth Mass* do not care for!

issue of the story, and that it was merely the trick of an amateur pretender to genius who had a habit of passing off the compositions of others as his own. It is curious that Holmes does not seem to have known the name of this person (Count Walsegg), though it was known to many in Germany long before his book was written; he does not give it, as he would almost certainly have done had he known it. Mr. Prout, in his new edition of Holmes, adds an appendix giving a sufficient *résumé* of the main facts of the story as now known. Dr. Pole has (very judiciously for the interest of his readers) arranged his story so as to unfold the facts in the order in which they came to light, keeping back the whole revelation till its actual place at the close of the story. The main facts may just be run over here, referring the reader to Dr. Pole's pages for details and proofs.

The mystification of which the *Requiem* was destined to be the subject commences from the very earliest moment of its existence, for the opening movement is dated, in Mozart's own writing, "1792" (the year after his death). What happened after his death was briefly this. Mozart had not composed or at least written out any of the *Requiem* farther than the first eight bars of the "Lacrymosa," and here was the widow in straitened circumstances, and a valuable musical property—for which part of the price had been paid, and the remainder might be confidently looked for from an evidently wealthy client (for he had voluntarily promised an increase of Mozart's original terms)—lying incomplete. Accordingly she went to Eybler, an able musician of the day, and obtained from him a signed undertaking to finish the *Requiem*, "begun by her late husband," by the middle of the ensuing Lent, and to let no copy pass into other hands. This is dated December 21, 1791, about a fortnight after the composer's death: it was the latest of all the pieces of evidence that came to light, but we are taking the facts now in their actual order. In going to Eybler the widow was, in the first instance, neglecting the wishes of her husband,

almost whose last words on his death-bed were to charge his friend and pupil Süssmayer with the completion of the work. There is evidence that Eybler made some sort of attempt to fill in Mozart's outlines in the original score, but for whatever cause he fortunately abandoned the task, and Madame Mozart was compelled at last to fall back upon Süssmayer, the only man who really had some data to go upon, in his knowledge of Mozart's intentions communicated by the composer himself. He accordingly filled in the instrumental portions of those movements of which Mozart had written only the voice parts with a few indications of the figures and instrumentation of the accompaniment (the first two movements alone having been entirely completed by Mozart); and his handwriting being naturally very like Mozart's, perhaps from the mere fact of his working with the great composer so much,[1] he had no difficulty in producing a very successful imitation of it. This score went off to Count Walsegg, who at once made a copy of it in his own writing, impudently heading it "*Requiem* composto dal Conte Walsegg," and keeping the Mozart-Süssmayer score carefully locked up. The latter was sold with his other music, and is now in the Imperial Library at Vienna. The widow, who had retained a copy, seems now to have considered how she could further turn it to account, and sold manuscript copies right and left, having already legally parted with her property in it to Count Walsegg. Holmes incidentally refers to the lady as being "as unskilled as her husband in business"; but though her letters are written in a vague, shambling style worthy of Mrs. Tulliver, her eye to business seems to have been only too keen. She at last determined to offer the work for publication to Breitkopf and Härtel, who, however, heard some rumour about Mozart not having finished it, and wrote to Süssmayer, who replied in a letter both candid and modest,

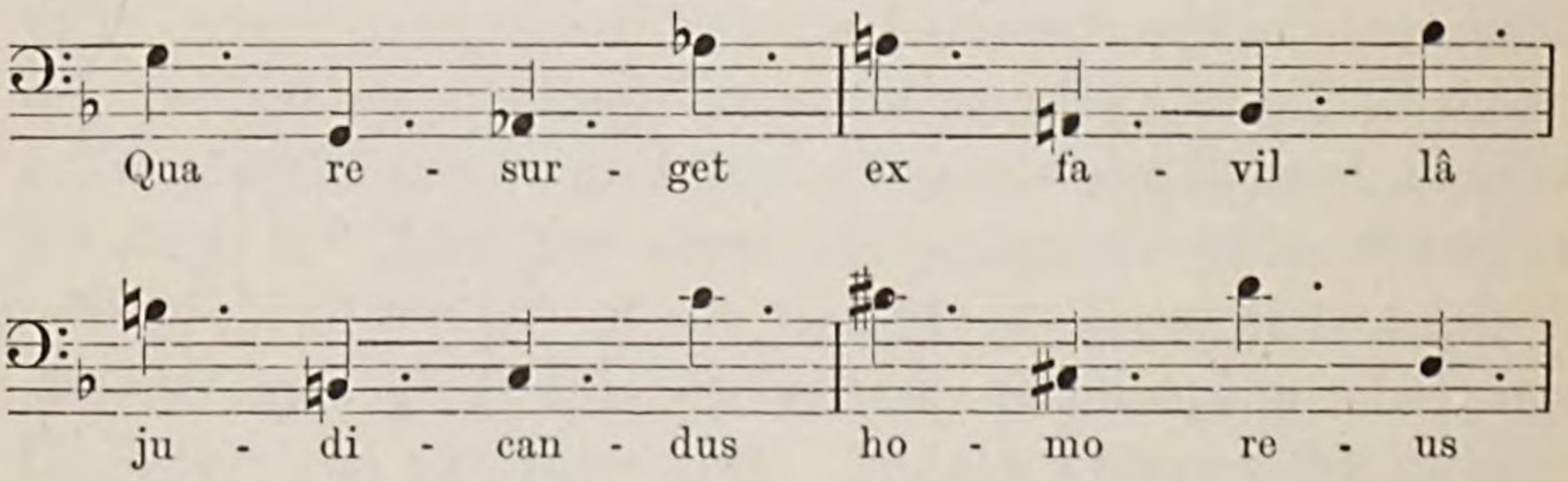
[1] When Mozart went to Prague, to produce *La Clemenza di Tito*, for instance, he took Süssmayer with him almost in the position of *collaborateur*, the latter being intrusted with all the recitative dialogue.

and which is highly creditable to him, though it is difficult to understand how he came to be silent for so long both before and after on the matter, unless the widow had some hold over him that we do not know of. He made the statement already referred to as to the portion of the work which was his, observing that he owed too much to Mozart to silently allow work of his own, which must be so inferior, to be given out as Mozart's, but that the composer had conversed with him on the development of the work, and communicated to him the principal features, and he trusted that in what he had done "some traces of the great composer's never-to-be-forgotten teaching were apparent." Breitkopf and Härtel, apparently equally desirous to act honestly in the matter, published Süssmayer's letter in the *Allegemeine musikalische Zeitung*, though they obviously did not give full credit to his claims. One result of the publication was that the titled charlatan who had secured the first score, and had actually had it openly performed as his own at places not many miles from Vienna, forgot his prudence so far as to demand, through his legal agent, an explanation, complaining that he had been cheated in paying for Mozart, and apparently not getting him; and there was actually an interview between the Count's and the widow's agents, at which the portions due to Süssmayer were pointed out to the former, who professed himself content. After this the matter only excited occasional talk till 1825, when Gottfried Weber, composer and critic, having had his attention specially turned to Requiems in general (he had composed one himself which he was anxious to push), startled the musical world by an article in his journal (the *Cæcilia*) in which Mozart's *Requiem* was declared to be quite unworthy of Mozart, and the theory suggested that Süssmayer probably wrote all or nearly all of it, and that the whole had been an adroit attempt to acquire fame for his work under cover of Mozart's name. This gave rise to a storm of controversy in which nearly every eminent musician of the day took part, even up to Beethoven (the last

person in the world to have formed a cool judgment on such a point), from whom there is extant a short, highly characteristic letter, quite ignoring the arguments either way, but bristling with personal *animus* against Weber, whom he had his reasons for disliking. It is impossible here to touch upon even the salient points of this extensive controversy, for further account of which the reader may be referred to Dr. Pole's pages. I may mention only, in passing, the extraordinary fact of the publication, in 1828, of the new biography of Mozart by Nissen, Madame Mozart's second husband, without the slightest reference to the controversy or to the questions as to the authenticity of the *Requiem;* an omission which must of course have been intentional. The next step in the story, some time subsequent, was the announcement in the *Musikalische Zeitung* in 1839, of the discovery of the complete score in Mozart's own handwriting (this being the Mozart-Süssmayer score originally sent to Count Walsegg, and carefully kept out of sight by him during his lifetime), and the formation of a committee of musical experts to examine it. The majority of this committee were in favour of Mozart, on the evidence of the handwriting: the minority pointed out minute but important differences in certain notes and letters between the admittedly genuine and the suspected portions, which led to a search for other manuscripts by Süssmayer, the collation of which, when found, showed the most extraordinary similarity to Mozart's handwriting, accompanied, however, by exactly the same minute differences observable in the suspected parts of the *Requiem* score. The result was a last (almost hopeless) appeal to the widow, who now, in her old age, seemed to think there was nothing more to be gained by concealing the truth, and said, "If the score is finished it is *not* by Mozart, for he did not finish it," the remainder of her letter vaguely attesting the general correctness of Süssmayer's claims. This, with the circumstantial evidence, settled the matter.

Are we, then, to conclude that, in listening to some of what

have been the favourite movements of Mozart's *Requiem*, we are hearing only the work of a composer of lower rank, none of whose acknowledged productions have survived? Not necessarily. What we now know, as positively as written and circumstantial evidence can prove anything, is, which parts of the score Mozart actually *wrote*, and which he did not, and these are distinguished from Süssmayer's by the letters "M" and "S" in the modern Leipzig edition. But we are still left with the not only possible, but probable, conclusion that in parts which were entirely written by Süssmayer he was nevertheless working upon ideas which he had derived from Mozart. The late Sir G. Macfarren, whose opinion on such a point is, of course, to be received with all deference, refused credence altogether to the evidence, and observed *inter alia* that the first seventeen bars of the "Lacrymosa" form a complete and connected idea, and must have been by the same hand. With all respect for so high an authority, I can discover no such necessary continuity as to invalidate the positive testimony that Mozart's handwriting stops at the eighth bar of the movement, where there is a half close. It is, however, possible that Mozart, with his known habit of completing a composition in his mind before he wrote it down, may have played over the whole movement to Süssmayer, who retained a general recollection of it. A stronger piece of internal testimony in favour of its being essentially Mozart's idea is, to my mind, to be found in the treatment of the bass of the chorus at the passage—



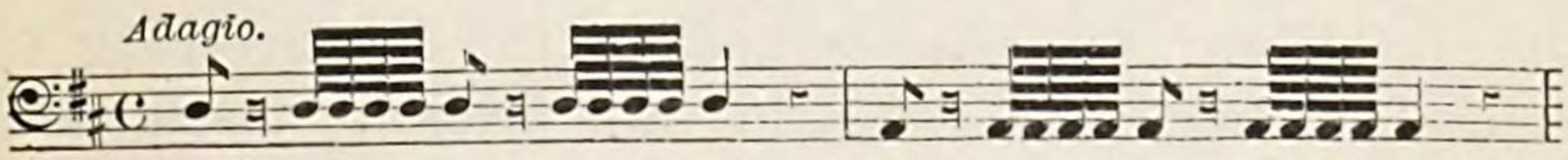
so grand in itself, and so completely in Mozart's manner. On the other hand, it must be remembered that Süssmayer,

though none of his works have retained a permanent place, was no mere nonentity in music. He produced compositions which enjoyed high repute in their own day, and had lived in such close artistic relations with Mozart that he might well have caught some of the inspiration of the great composer.[1] My impression as to the later movements is that Süssmayer probably wrote the "Sanctus" with the recollection of Mozart's ideas and suggestions;[2] that the "Benedictus" may have been entirely his in melody and design as well as in execution—that it differs perceptibly from Mozart's style and technique is generally conceded; but that the "Agnus Dei," so original, so unusual in treatment, and so reminding us, in the accompaniments, of the spirit of passages in *Don Giovanni*, must have been Mozart's in idea, and that Süssmayer merely expanded it and put it into connected form. However this may be, we have every reason to be glad that, as Mozart incontestably did not finish, in writing, this his last and in some respects most elevated work, its completion should (in accordance with his own wish) have fallen into the hands of the only person who had the data and the ability for completing it in a suitable spirit, and rendering it the beautiful whole which it now is.

And what are we to say as to that brief, but comprehensive, judgment which Hiller the elder inscribed on his copy of the *Requiem* score, and with which Dr. Pole concludes his interesting essay before referred to: "Opus summum, viri summi"?

[1] The few compositions of Süssmayer's which I have had the opportunity of examining exhibit a vein of melody very similar to that of Mozart in his lighter moments, and very graceful and spontaneous; they give, however, no indication of a constructive power at all resembling Mozart's.

[2] What was that effect of the drums which the dying composer tried to indicate to Süssmayer? Might it not have been that characteristic "rush" of the drums on the four short notes, ending on a long one on the accented part of the bar, which forms so fine a feature in the accompaniment to the "Sanctus"?—



In regard to the first half of the sentence the portions of the *Requiem* which are unquestionably Mozart's may be held to bear it out, at all events in comparison with his other choral and vocal works; he has never elsewhere risen so high in grandeur and pathos of expression, combined with perfectly-balanced musical form. The "viri summi" we can hardly, however, accept *sans phrase*, though I by no means share the opinion many people would be ready to express, that it is extravagant praise. But the varieties of opinion or prejudice about Mozart at the present day are exceedingly curious. We have, on the one hand, such bombast as that with which Nohl concludes his book, describing Mozart as the man "to whom it was given to link together the godlike with humanity, the mortal with the immortal," and who, "amid all his lofty aims, esteemed the loftiest of all to be the elevation of humanity," a character one hardly knows whether to smile or to sigh over, in comparison with the biography which it closes. On the other hand, we have the criticisms of Wagner and his attendant scribes, who regard Mozart as merely a necessary link in the development of an art at that time imperfect, and we have the analyses of concert programmes in which Mozart is patted on the back, as it were, and his symphonies dismissed with a kind of "Really, how very nice it is, after all!" and set down as quite inferior to Schubert; and in a literary article in the *Athenæum* one day I saw Mozart referred to as a genius analogous with Tom Moore! Could anything more pathetically exemplify the hopeless fatuity of the average English literary mind in regard to music? For the benefit of such people, let it here be at least explained that this musician, whom they seem to regard as a maker of pretty tunes, possessed a scientific power over musical materials and musical construction equalled only by that of Bach, and hardly surpassed by him; that his own interest and sympathy was always with the highest and severest forms of the art, his own favourite occupation the extemporising of fugues and fugued fantasias, his own favourite instrument

the organ, upon which, though with no opportunity for acquiring great mechanical skill, he played so that musicians who remembered Bach's playing declared that they "could have believed old Bach had risen from the grave;" and that as regards mastery over the higher forms of musical composition Schubert was a mere child in comparison with him.

In his later days the man Mozart, it must be confessed, does not represent, apart from his art, a very high ideal of life; nor does the strong light of Jahn's biography benefit his memory very much in this respect, save in so far as it justifies us in regarding him as a beautiful nature spoiled by untoward circumstances, acting upon some inherent weaknesses of character. In youth he was far more serious and self-respecting than in later life; but Grimm, who saw much of him during his stay in Paris, characterises him in a letter to the elder Mozart, as "*zu treuherzig*, peu actif, trop aisé à attraper, trop peu occupé des moyens qui peuvent conduire à la fortune;" and Grimm's penetration is sadly justified by the records of the composer's later life—the tale of improvidence and carelessness about money, resulting in constant grinding embarrassment; of thoughtless expenditure on the whim of the moment, ill counterbalanced by equally thoughtless expectations of something turning up; of the swindles perpetrated on him by worthless companions, who were pardoned and taken into good fellowship again out of mere easy-hearted good nature, reckless of consequences; of wine and billiards flown to as the refuge from anxiety. He had no doubt a hard part to play, at a time when musicians, even of the highest genius, were so dependent on the capricious patronage of a very flighty aristocracy, thinking more of its own pleasure than of art, and when composers of less independence and firmness of artistic principle could get bread which was out of the reach of the higher and truer artist. At the same time it can hardly be questioned that Mozart's difficulties in the latter years of his life arose mainly from the defects of a character naturally gay, *insouciant*, and pleasure-

loving; exactly the sort of character which makes a man a general favourite, but which a committee of the Charity Organization Society would probably report as "ineligible for assistance." His power of application and rapidity of work under occasional impulses were remarkable—witness the composition of the *Don Giovanni* overture, and the brief space in which his three great symphonies were written; but it is the old story of the hare and the tortoise. His fitful work could not keep pace with his liabilities, and every now and then he seems to have had pangs of conscience about his want of foresight and prudence, and pathetically promises in his later letters to his wife and others that if he can only get out of these present difficulties they shall never be in so wretched a condition of dependence again. In his earlier days he had written to his father that he would not consent to give lessons—let people who could only play the piano do that, he was meant for a higher place. It is touching to compare with this the postscript to one of his letters to a friend asking for pecuniary aid: "Endeavour to make it known that I do not object to giving lessons." And yet at this very time one of his pupils (Kelly) has left it on record that Mozart "would at any time rather play a game of billiards with him than give him a lesson." It is impossible to look harshly on the spectacle of a sensitive man of genius, involved in the sordid difficulties of want of means which are so peculiarly irritating to such a nature, taking refuge in any dissipation that would distract his mind and make him happy for the moment. He would in all probability have lived regularly enough if he had sooner enjoyed the income which the Kappell-meistership of St. Stephen's would have procured him, and which it is sad to think he only just lived to bequeath to Albrechtsberger.[1] But truth is truth, and one can hardly make a hero

[1] With his characteristic unselfishness, one of his last directions on his death-bed was that his decease might be kept secret for a time from every one but Albrechtsberger, in order that the latter might have the best chance among candidates for the post which would then be vacant. How many men, under the circumstances, would have thought of that?

of a man who consoled himself under difficulties, which a more prudent way of life might have avoided, by punch[1] and billiards and the society of such a low rascal as Shikaneder, who, besides defrauding him of his just profits, probably did the composer more harm in other ways than his best friends could undo. Pantomimes and ballets composed by himself, and the assumption of harlequinade characters at the Carnival balls, were among the amusements of this period of the composer's life. Another charge which has been made against him, that of immorality, must probably be taken *cum grano*. The mere fact of his companionship with Shikaneder, who was a notorious profligate, would have been sufficient to give suggestion to such a charge; and he may have occasionally lapsed from the strict morality of his early life; but the internal evidence of his letters to his wife at this same period is to my mind conclusive against the idea of his having become a libertine in any serious sense; they are marked by a spirit of truthful and almost child-like affection and goodness of heart which is entirely incompatible with such a course of life as, in Burns's words—

> "Hardens a' the heart,
> An' petrifies the feeling."

Mozart's general culture, apart from his art, was not of a high order, as is evident from the total lack of any reference to the higher class of literature in his correspondence; and among his personal characteristics we have it on record that he was a dressy man, vain of his beautiful hair, fond of rings, chains, and finery, and passionately fond of dancing, which his wife declared he cared more for than music. It is perhaps partly owing to such traits as these that there has been a tendency to regard him as rather the "light-weight" figure among the great composers. As to general culture, however, there is not the least reason to suppose that Bach, who is regarded as such a reverend figure in music, was one whit

[1] Not, however, to the extent of excess or intoxication: that is denied on all hands.

superior to Mozart: both were great artistic craftsmen, whose best mind was in their work; but Bach was a solid, highly respectable patriarch, while Mozart was a gay, lively man of the world. The strong sense of character, and power of musically defining it, which is shown in his operas, should in itself be sufficient to refute the idea which some critics of to-day seem to entertain, that he was essentially a superior class of music-maker, producing by a happy instinct rather than by intellectual effort. Yet he is charged, more especially in regard to his instrumental music, with want of earnestness in his art, with having no definite aim, or, as I once saw the charge more distinctly formulated in print, with a thoughtless habit of taking a beautiful melody, and elaborating it solely with the view of displaying its beauty, with no ulterior aim. Is this, then, so ignoble a task? We have Filippo Lippi's answer—

> "If you get simple beauty and nought else,
> You get about the best thing God invents:"

an answer the weight and significance of which are apt to be sadly overlooked in these days of self-conscious theorizing upon the *morale* of art. But the further answer on the part of Mozart might be that, inasmuch as his special gift consisted in the utterance of feeling through musical form, we have no right to demand that he should also have uttered that feeling through other channels, literary or moral, not congenial to his genius; that in the face of the unquestionable evidence, in his operas and in his *Requiem*, that he did regard and use music for the expression of character and emotion and pathos (and perhaps it would be difficult to name any composition in the whole range of sacred music more poignantly pathetic than the "Recordare" in the *Requiem*), we have no right to assume that there was no such emotional feeling behind his instrumental music, merely because he did not formulate in words what he could better express in music.

In one important branch of instrumental music, that of which the pianoforte key-board is the medium, Mozart, no

doubt, appears somewhat *passé* in much of his work, because he never thoroughly emancipated himself from the old clavier and harpsichord style which was in vogue in his youth, never fully appreciated the new and different powers of the pianoforte, which was only coming into general use in the latter part of his career. In most of his pianoforte works he still retains the old-fashioned ornaments of trills, shakes, and "grace" notes which belonged to the harpsichord period. In those compositions for the pianoforte, however, which represent his most serious work, these reminiscences of the old school are less prominent, and he rises sometimes to a dignity and breadth of style in which he is not surpassed by any other composer for the instrument, as in the Fantasia and Fugue in C, and the Sonata in A minor, commencing—





the first movement of which is quite symphonic in character, while the *finale* is a remarkable anticipation of Beethoven's manner, and appears, indeed, to have given the hint for the *finale* to the later composer's famous D minor Sonata. Nor must we forget the two great Fantasias in F minor, originally written for a mechanical organ (Mozart, with his usual artistic integrity, putting his best work into the humble commission he had accepted), and subsequently arranged by himself as

[1] It is odd that Jahn, in his chapter on Mozart's pianoforte music, omits all mention of this especially fine example.

pianoforte duets. One of these in particular, that with the fugue on the vigorous subject—



contrasted with an *andante* movement of exquisite beauty, is one of the greatest instrumental compositions in existence. It is only partially effective on the pianoforte, having naturally much more of the organ character, but Mr. Best has done the good service of transcribing it for one performer on the organ, and whoever has heard his rendering of these two fantasias (the fugued one especially) on a large organ will recognize them as the most remarkable contribution to organ-music since Bach; the only one, in fact, which can in any way be paralleled with Bach's compositions for the instrument.

The truth of the matter as to Mozart's standing among his great compeers may be summed up thus. The judgment which has called him "vir summus" is justifiable in this respect, that he achieved a more complete balance of style, a more complete blending of qualities often supposed to be incompatible, a more complete perception of the relation of the means to the end, than any other great composer has habitually realized. Beethoven has exhibited the same completeness and balance of form and style in some of his works, but hardly in those which on general grounds would be considered his greatest or most characteristic productions. Mozart, in his operas, absolutely blent the elements of Italian melody and of German scientific construction into a form so complete and apparently spontaneous that all sense of nationality is lost (as in the highest art it should be), and the style of the music seems the natural outgrowth of the conditions of abstract beauty and fitness in musical form. It

is just this cosmopolitan character in his art which makes him so obnoxious to the modern Teutonic school of musicians and critics, whose tone about these things reminds one of the man whom Heine met at some gathering of his dear countrymen, who told him that "at this German meeting must the German German speak." In his three leading symphonies we find the same complete finish and balance of form, the same precise sense of proportion and scale, and of the relation of the means to the end. It would be impossible to find anywhere more perfect beauty, without spot or stain, than in the slow movement of the Symphony in C, or a nobler and more calm serenity than breathes to us in that second subject of the first movement, where, after the pause of the whole orchestra, there breaks on the ear that melody for the violins in octaves which seems to come fresh to us, every time we hear it, from some blissful region above the reach of all human sorrow and decay.[1] And certainly, speaking relatively, we may say that no musician has ever achieved such passionate expression with so few notes and instruments as Mozart in the first movement of the G minor Symphony; no composer ever had more right to say, as he did in answer to the Emperor's criticism on one of his operas as having "too many notes," "There are just as many notes, your Majesty, as there ought to be;" no one ever achieved on such a scale the feat which he did in the *finale* to the Symphony in C, of producing a movement of the most complicated and scientific construction, in which, nevertheless, the idea of science and complication is never present to the listener, and the whole sounds as spontaneous and unhampered in effect as if it were a mere outpouring of simple melody. Then what

[1] It is curious that this beautiful melody was originally composed as a *buffo* song for a bass; the only instance known to him, Jahn says, of Mozart using a melody over again. There is a very slight alteration in the melodic design in the Symphony; otherwise its totally new expression depends on the slower time, and on the manner in which it is introduced—after a long pause preceded by a passage of loud and boisterous character; an interesting example of the effect of judicious *placing* of musical detail.

is the other side to all this? For it has been hinted that there is one. It is that Mozart's genius, as known to us in his published works, does come to some extent under that limitation which is often found accompanying the most perfect artistic balance in painter, poet, and musician; that kind of limitation which is described and analyzed in Browning's poem before referred to, *Andrea del Sarto.* Life is many-sided but imperfect, and a perfectly balanced art is apt to fall short in the intensity of expression which the representation of the most poignant and passionate moments of human emotion demands. It cannot be said that Mozart never realizes the highest intensity of emotional expression; there are moments when he does, as in some parts of the *Requiem*, in the closing scene of *Don Giovanni*, in the opening of the pianoforte Fantasia in C minor, and in the slow movement of the Sonata in the same key which is grouped with it. But it is not very often that he reaches this intensity of expression. In the *Andante* of the Symphony in C we seem to gaze on a face of the most calm and perfect loveliness; in the *Allegretto* from Beethoven's Seventh Symphony we are conscious of a passionate cry from the depths of the human heart. And if we compare the two composers in their gayer moments, the *finale* of Beethoven's Eighth Symphony is to the *finale* of Mozart's in E flat as a bacchanalian orgy compared with a gay and merry *fête champêtre;* though it must be added that the construction and working out of Mozart's movement is far more scientific and finished. Mozart is the more perfect artist, but Beethoven is the more intense and passionate poet, and humanity has answered to his call. But even admitting this limitation in Mozart's power of emotional expression, we must make two very large allowances in regard to him. If we remember how many of his works were produced under very disadvantageous circumstances, and hampered by the imperfect capacities of his executants, and if we consider what is recorded of the effect of his extempore playing, we may well imagine that,

could we have had crystallized for us what Mozart played on the organ and pianoforte when pleasing only himself and listeners of the highest order, we might find that he came closer to Beethoven on the pianoforte, and was more near surpassing Bach on the organ, than his engraved music gives us any adequate idea of; and if, secondly, we take into account the fact of his early death, that he had been nearly all his life harassed and in difficulty, and if we bear in mind that he was steadily rising in his art up to his last moment, and that the portions of his last work which he completed are the highest and most serious in spirit of all that he ever wrote, we may be disposed to think that, could he have had the twenty years more of life which were allotted to Beethoven,[1] with the competency and freedom from care which were insured to him, unhappily, just too late, he might very probably have earned the name not only of the most perfect, but the greatest of musical composers.

[1] The death of Beethoven at the same age as Mozart (thirty-five) would have deprived us of all the Symphonies after the *Eroica;* of the *Sonata Appassionata* and all the succeeding Pianoforte Sonatas, including the three great ones which close the list; of the Pianoforte Concertos in G and E flat (the former, like the Symphony in C minor, appears to have been commenced but not completed in his thirty-fifth year); and of both the Masses. It needs only a moment's thought to realize how this might have affected the ultimate estimate of his genius.

CHAPTER V.

BEETHOVEN.

"Patience, perseverance, and a steady determination carry one to the goal."—BEETHOVEN'S *Counterpoint Study-book.*

THOUGH it was in this country first, after his own, that the genius of the great master of modern instrumental music received recognition and a cautious and tentative appreciation, it was many years before the greatness and importance of Beethoven as a musician were at all rightly appreciated here, and it is only in recent years that his later and more "advanced" productions have obtained a general hearing, and something like popular acceptance, among English audiences. But during the last few years musical opinion in this country has travelled fast, and from being a very conservative musical public, we are showing symptoms of running to the opposite extreme and desiring all things that are new and strange. The effect of this modern ardour has shown itself, as far as Beethoven is concerned, in a disproportionate emphasis on his latest and in many cases least balanced works, in order to reduce him to the position of a link in a chain of musical progress supposed to find its culmination in the latest productions of a special school of musicians; a theory of Beethoven which has been seconded, if not suggested, by various essays and literary ejaculations more remarkable for enthusiasm than for calm critical judgment. It is the existence of this rather militant

school of criticism, and the effect which it has had in promoting what appears to me to be a very false and one-sided view of Beethoven's genius and artistic aims, which must be the apology for adding to the long list of essays on Beethoven an attempt at a discussion of his genius and his methods in a somewhat more dispassionate spirit, and apart from any committal to a fore-ordained theory.

The greatest, or at all events the most typical, works of Beethoven are the symphonies for orchestra and the sonatas for the pianoforte; which in regard to general form may be classed together, the pianoforte sonata (in his hands especially) being only the symphony on a smaller scale, limited by the capacities of the instrument, and without the variety of tonal effect or colouring to be obtained from the orchestra. The nature and manner of development of this musical form have been sketched in Chapter I. Mozart added nothing to the form and expression of the symphony as developed by Haydn; he surpassed the latter only in so far as, being a more powerful genius and a greater master of musical construction, he wrote in a more dignified and more powerful style; and his great Symphony in C displays a pomp and breadth in the first and last movements, and an intensity of feeling in parts of the slow movement, such as were far beyond the reach of Haydn. This and his other two leading symphonies are works absolutely perfect as far as they go; they are among the rare things in which not a note can be added or subtracted without injury to the balance of the whole. And at this Mozartian point of its progress, we may liken each movement of the symphony to a piece of musical architecture, having its various stages or stories; its ground story, in which the leading features of the structure are indicated, and their grouping; its superstructure, wherein the materials are played with, and ornamented, and diversified. All this, let it be noted, is entirely a matter of dealing with abstract qualities of proportion and symmetry in sound-passages; nor did the symphony and sonata, in the hands of Mozart and Haydn,

claim to be anything more than simply beautiful music. Mozart again, as already observed, never hints at any idea or meaning underlying his musical inspiration. His symphonies were music for the sake of music. The most important and radical difference which modern criticism has suggested between him and his great successor is that the latter is asserted to have habitually aimed, and in some of his greatest works unquestionably did aim, at making instrumental music the expression of a distinct, preconceived poetic idea, capable, if he had so willed, of being expressed in words. Having regard to the conditions of the art when Beethoven took it up, we are here to consider how far this view of his contributions to it is correct, how far he really was habitually influenced by the desire to express a distinct and definable idea in music, and how far such a desire, if entertained, is or is not within the possibilities of the art of music unaided by vocal expression; not omitting to notice also some of the artistic detail in which his work differs from and surpasses that of his predecessors.

It is hardly necessary here to recapitulate *seriatim* even the main points of Beethoven's biography. His work was not influenced by outward circumstances so much as by his own temperament; and though in his case we have till recently been poor enough in regard to biography—Schindler's badly written Life, the only important one accessible in English, being made still worse by Moscheles' bad translation—the article on Beethoven contributed by Sir G. Grove to his Musical Dictionary gives a very graphic sketch of the composer's life and circumstances, easily accessible. But a few of the salient points in regard to his circumstances and personality may be put together here, so that we may not discuss his music without at the same time having before us a definite conception of the manner of man he was who produced it. Beethoven was born in 1770 at Bonn, and, like most great musicians, came of a musical stock, his grandfather having been a singer and afterwards

Kapellmeister in the court band of the Elector of Cologne, at Bonn, and his father a tenor singer in the same body; the latter a bad-tempered, drinking man, passing poor on thirty pounds a year, his salary as singer (which seems to have been his only income); but who, from whatever mixed motives, took the trouble to give his obviously clever son all the musical instruction he could, and kept him rigidly to the collar from a very tender age. At the age of eleven the boy became pupil of Neefe, the recently appointed chapel organist; and at the same age as Handel received exactly the same proof of his master's confidence, in being left in charge of the chapel organ as Neefe's deputy when the latter had to leave Bonn for a time owing to the movements of the court. His early taste for the organ Beethoven never lost in theory, though he disused the instrument in practice: he said in later life that in youth he had loved the organ, but that its great sounds affected his nerves too much to allow him to continue it; but that he considered an organ-player who was master of his instrument as the greatest of musical performers. Shortly over the age of twelve he was appointed Cembalist (pianist and conductor of rehearsals) in the theatre orchestra, and some little time afterwards received a definite appointment as second organist, with more honour than salary. A flying visit to Vienna at the age of seventeen introduced him to the notice of Mozart, who was greatly struck with Beethoven's extemporising on the piano, and whose own playing does not seem to have impressed Beethoven so much as it did most other people. The fact, probably, was that the young man had formed his own style of playing the piano already, and it was doubtless different from that of Mozart. Beethoven's real artistic life, however, begins when, in 1792, at the instance and with the pecuniary assistance of the Elector, he left Bonn to study more systematically at Vienna under Haydn, Albrechtsberger, and Salieri. As might have been prophesied, he never returned to Bonn, and was henceforth an inhabitant of the Austrian capital, then the most

remarkable centre and rendezvous for musical genius in Europe.

What is remarkable and worthy of notice is, that up to this time (and he was now twenty-two) there is not a single written composition of any importance from Beethoven. In this respect he is rather exceptional among great composers. Mozart had published a long list of works, including some very important and masterly things, before that age; Mendelssohn wrote his most fresh and original, if not his greatest instrumental work, at the age of seventeen. But this delay in producing is in keeping, as we shall have occasion to see, with the whole history of Beethoven's genius. In the meantime he at once attracted the attention and astonishment of the Viennese musicians and amateurs by his power of extemporising compositions on the pianoforte, and was an easy victor in several trials of strength with leading players of the day, who seldom measured swords with him a second time. One of them, the Abbé Gelinek, is recorded to have announced to a friend his invitation to meet a new pianist, and his intention to "make mincemeat of him"; but on being subsequently asked as to the event, replied that the devil was in the young man: "he extemporised like no one since Mozart." Gelinek described him as "a short, ugly, dark, cross-looking young man, who had come here some time ago to learn composition from Haydn." Reference has been already made (page 228) to the well-known and characteristic story of his meeting in the same way Steibelt, a maker of filagree for the piano, whose "Storm" was long after a *pièce de résistance* in girls' schools, and who on this occasion played in a quintett of his own, with a very brilliant piano part. Beethoven, coming to play in turn, threw the violoncello part of Steibelt's composition upside down on the piano desk, and from some suggestion in that, drummed with one finger a "subject" from which presently he evoked such a performance that before it was over Steibelt had fled the scene altogether, utterly annihilated. This

and other records of Beethoven's power of extemporising with the greatest effect on the instant, and from the roughest hint, form a significant comment, to begin with, on the theory that he was one who could do nothing without a "poetic basis." With him, as with Mozart, it was only necessary to get him to the key-board (which often required some management in the first instance), and he was always "in the vein," and able to rise to the occasion; the feel of the keys was "poetic basis" enough for him at any time, so far as extemporising was concerned.[1] Gelinek's reference to him as "a short, dark, cross-looking young man" is pretty well borne out by other reminiscences of contemporaries at this time. He was very wayward and often ill-mannered; dressed anyhow; spoke with a strong provincial accent, and indulged violent dislikes with no sufficient reason: one witness mentions a habit of putting his head inside the door before entering a room, to see if there were any one he disliked there. But his genius and a certain thoroughness and honesty about his character atoned for all his awkwardness, even in the most fastidious society of Vienna at a time when the aristocracy were exceedingly aristocratic, and his presence and his playing were sought for as a favour in the houses of princes and other dignitaries. At Prince Lichnowsky's he nearly lived for some time, doing whatever he pleased, even to swearing at his host, and calling him

[1] An English visitor in Vienna, late in Beethoven's life, records the contrivance by which he was cajoled into playing when the company dared not ask him directly: some one affected to run over part of one of his compositions on the piano, purposely making mistakes, and Beethoven stretched out his hand to the key-board to show the correct rendering, and remained playing for half an hour. Ries records that while Beethoven was giving him a lesson, and sitting at the side of the piano, Ries having for some reason played over the subject of the first chorus in Graun's *Tod Jesu*, the master, struck by the idea, leaned over to the key-board, and extemporised on it for a quarter of an hour, apparently quite unconscious of his uncomfortable sidelong position. It may interest the reader to see the subject which had such attraction for Beethoven:—



names when in a fit of temper; and there are many instances on record of his almost incredibly undignified rudeness and stupid joking at this time. Outrageous as his faults of manner were, however, they were faults of manner only; his high character and principle seem to have been as unimpeachable at this period as they always remained throughout his life. Of his personal appearance a few years later, Czerny, the pianist, who as a little boy of ten was taken to Beethoven on approval as a pupil, gives a good description; of his shock of black hair standing stiffly up, his beard of several days' growth, which made his naturally dark face seem still darker, his hands very hairy, and the fingers remarkably broad at the tips; another account describes them as looking as if they were chopped off short.[1] In stature he was short, but very strongly built, with a broad powerful chin, and large expressive eyes.

During these early Vienna days Beethoven was working diligently at the study of composition, first under Haydn, whose teaching he spoke of with something like contempt, and with whom he could never get on (Haydn being in every characteristic of genius, character, and manner an utter contrast to Beethoven), and afterwards with Albrechtsberger, Mozart's friend, and his successor as Kapellmeister at St. Stephen's; one of the greatest authorities on counterpoint and fugue, his treatise on which is still a standard work. Beethoven's relations with his teachers, and the spirit in which he carried on his studies, are highly characteristic. The learned Albrechtsberger told an inquirer that Beethoven had learned nothing properly, and would never do anything good. At the same time, one of Beethoven's Study-books in Counterpoint, which has been published, and from which the sentence at the head of this chapter is taken, shows how

[1] This broad square finger-end is, in fact, a special characteristic of the key-board hand. Herr Rubinstein has it in a remarkable degree. It was the same with Handel, of whom Quin the actor, after watching him play and hearing some reference from a lady afterwards as to the delicate touch of his fingers, replied, "Fingers! Toes, by G—d, madam, toes!"

conscientiously he worked through the dry exercises which he professed to regard as futile and antiquated, relieving his mind every now and then by sarcastic comments written as head- and tail-pieces to the musical exercises. After sketching the rules for the conduct of a fugue in two parts (it being usual for a student to treat each branch of counterpoint in two parts first, then in three, four, and so on), he adds—

"For my part I cannot fancy such a two-legged skeleton ; it seems to me a poor, meagre, unsatisfactory affair. . . . . So now we must proceed to crack the hard nut. It is a tiresome *pas de deux*, but it must be danced."

He notes having commenced one of his exercises with an imperfect concord (a common thing enough subsequently), and adds, "but I solemnly pledge myself not to commit this mortal sin again." The two following quotations are significant of the attitude of his mind towards conservative teaching in his art :—

"An antiquated rule makes it unlawful to go beyond the six nearest related keys, in a strictly conducted fugue ; but I am decidedly of opinion that one need not scruple to infringe this rule ; if a man have sharp eyes and can walk well, he may venture to go a little beyond the prescribed limits without danger."

"Let me not be supposed to advocate an impertinent contempt of the first principles of art, which are unchangeable ; I would only say that as time advances art has also advanced in a great many things. . . . . Why should a modern composer hesitate to use the far greater resources placed at his command? Why restrict himself to an antiquated simplicity, when both instruments and voices are able to interpret the most abstruse conceptions with perfect accuracy? *And yet I would advise a composer rather to be common-place than far-fetched in his ideas, or bombastic in the expression of them.*"

I have italicised this last sentence, because it is such a significant comment upon the common idea that Beethoven was essentially a musician of the *Sturm-und-Drang* school, instead of, as he really was, a most painstaking and, in his best works, a consummate artist. As to his estimate of the value of Albrechtsberger's exercises, he probably deceived himself. Beethoven never had that almost spontaneous and

innate power over the difficulties of scientific musical construction which Mozart possessed; none of his larger fugues are really good specimens of that class of composition, with which his genius was not in sympathy; but the short fugue passages introduced as episodes in many of his sonatas and symphonies are usually admirably effective, and that they are so is probably due to his patient plodding through the studies which gave him this facility in handling his materials. Indeed, in another of his notes, he observes, "Imitation[1] is a sort of graceful counterpart of the fugue, and if cleverly used makes no bad substitute for it." In this he was exactly describing his own future practice.

Beethoven's first formal appearance before the world as a composer did not take place till he was five-and-twenty, when, in 1795, his three Trios for pianoforte, violin, and violoncello were published as *Opus* 1. There had been a difference about these with Haydn before they were published; the third of the Trios showed already a good many signs of the composer's novel style and manner of treating the pianoforte, and Haydn, while approving the two others, recommended him not to publish the third. It is unquestionably the finest of the three; and Beethoven attributed to jealousy a piece of advice which was probably quite sincere, and only shows how impossible it was even for a man of genius of the *ancien régime* to understand what the new composer was about. He forgave Haydn so far, however, as to dedicate to him the next published work, the three first pianoforte sonatas, *Opus* 2, published a few months later. It was in March of the year 1795, shortly before his first publication, that he made his first public appearance as a pianoforte player, playing his own First Concerto in C major, finished in a great hurry on the afternoon before the concert, the proverbial "thief of time" having

[1] "Imitation" is where a phrase started by one part or voice is successively taken up and imitated by the others. It differs from fugue in that it is not carried on and worked out on any regular plan, but is a kind of fugitive and passing device: the parts also usually follow more close on one another's heels, as one may say, than in the starting of a fugue.

been as great a tempter to him as to Mozart in many similar instances. The piano on this occasion proving to be a semitone flat, he at once settled the matter by playing the piano part in C sharp instead of in C, a feat which has been equalled by players of less genius, but which is noticed here as showing how thoroughly he was at home all round in the practical part of his art, as there was not only the difference in reading the notes (which would have troubled him little, if indeed he were not playing from memory), but in such a transposition of key all the fingering of the passages would have to be altered on the moment. Having glanced at the outset of his career, we must now lay aside merely historical matters for what is the main object of these remarks, the consideration of the course which his genius took, and the effect which it had upon the art.

It has become somewhat too much the fashion of late to divide a great creative genius in art or poetry into three epochs; yet there is a certain inherent probability that, in the nature of things, there should be some such stages of development. The most original genius can never shake himself free at once from the influence of his immediate predecessors, and of the predominant feeling of his own day. He works for a time on the lines already laid down; then comes the time when he finds new materials, or new ways of dealing with the old ones, and shapes out a career for himself distinct from that of his predecessors; and then sometimes, but not invariably, follows the time when all that he has done seems unsatisfactory and little, and he endeavours consciously to reach after some new beauty, too often beyond his grasp, or beyond the capacity of his means of expression to realize. There are instances in which this more ambitious effort has realized some of the greatest things of art, others in which it has served to illustrate Keats's melancholy line comparing man to the courses of the year—

"He hath his winter, too, of pale misfeature."

The history of Beethoven's art, at all events, supports to a

great extent the classification into three periods which has been specially applied to him. His three epochs are hardly so marked perhaps as those of Turner, with whom nevertheless, in this respect, he suggests a good many points of comparison; and it would be absurd to try to fix the absolute point of departure of each epoch. There is hardly, in fact, a regular progression to be traced except on the most comprehensive view of his works; looking more in detail, we find a work which can only be classed with those of the first epoch occurring in the middle of the second (in cases where the date of composition as well as of publication is known); and, what is rather perplexing, we find that where the change of style can be distinctly made out it occurs at different periods in different classes of work; that the symphonies, for instance, are much more conservative than the piano works; the two first symphonies, which must be classed with the first epoch, and in which the composer had not yet found his characteristic method of writing for orchestra, being posterior to some of the most distinctly Beethovenish of the pianoforte sonatas. It seems probable that the handling of so serious a work as a great symphony, and the dealing with the larger and more varied means of expression presented by the orchestra as compared with chamber music, was undertaken by Beethoven with his characteristic caution and thoughtfulness, and that he wished to hazard nothing too bold till he had attained ample experience. At the same time the gulf which separates the third from the second symphony is so great artistically, though the interval of time is less than that between the first and second (and, indeed, the third symphony was begun almost while the second was being completed, though not produced till two years later), that we must look for some other reason than mere increase in the power of dealing with his materials, to account for such a sudden stride in his genius and method.

Recalling what has been said as to the nature of the symphony in the hands of Mozart, its purely abstract character as musical melody, rhythm, and proportion, it will be understood what is

implied in saying that Beethoven's two first symphonies belong essentially to the same class as those of Mozart. It is true that the second is much larger and more ambitious in its proportions, that in each there are new uses made of some of the instruments (of which more anon), and that the new development of the third movement, the old Minuet, is already partly accomplished. But the form and feeling of both are in the main those of the old school; nor can either of them as a whole be reckoned to have equalled Mozart's three finest symphonies in abstract beauty and elevation of style. Even in the exquisite slow movement of the Symphony in D, we find no hint of its being other than abstract music in the mind of the composer; indeed, when his pupil Ries afterwards inquired of him the reason for the numerous alterations made in this movement from its first sketch, he got no answer beyond "It is better so." But the third symphony arose in the first instance directly out of the admiration of Beethoven (who was a strong Republican) for the First Consul, who then wore to him the halo of a hero and deliverer of those who were under the bondage of hereditary tyrannies; coupled probably with the suggestions of Bernadotte, whom Beethoven then knew in Vienna, that the latter should compose something as a kind of homage to Napoleon. Whether the suggestion of Bernadotte, who seems to have been an amateur musician, arose from interest in Beethoven's genius, or whether it was prompted by the same motive which, as I have heard an eminent painter (who was *not* knighted) affirm, leads to the conferring of knighthood on artists and musicians, viz. the desire to increase the prestige of the monarchical establishment by connecting men of genius with it, at all events the idea bore a glorious fruit in the *Sinfonia Eroica*, inspired by the desire to shadow forth in music something of the greatness of a heroic life and death. Before it was ever performed, came the news of the acceptance of the title of Emperor by Napoleon, and the score was flung with execrations on the floor, whence it was not lifted for some days. Fortunately for us, however,

though the ideal hero had sunk into the "new tyrant," the music intended to celebrate him was already composed and eventually given to the world.

Here was something apparently distinct from what had been attempted in instrumental music before. Instead of listening to abstract melodic and harmonic proportion for their own sake, the hearers were to regard the emotional expression of the music as portraying the feelings and emotional impressions of a great soul in conflict with the mystery of life. Guided by the general indication of the title afterwards given to it, "*Sinfonia Eroica* to celebrate the memory of a great man," it is not difficult to trace in the first movement the turn of feeling which pervaded the mind of the composer: the calm dignity of the leading theme; the thoughtful melancholy of the second subject, where the fragmentary phrases sighing from one instrument to another seem like the broken memories of past happiness; the passages of turmoil and conflict through which we discern plainly the march of a giant will ready to battle with all obstacles; all this we can feel, all of us who bring any imagination of our own to meet that of the composer; can feel it all the more powerfully because it is left vague and "unbodied" (to use Shelley's phrase), because Beethoven did not permit himself to be tempted into the fatal error of *labelling* his themes, and thus rudely drawing attention to the inadequacy of musical sounds to express definite ideas. He expresses emotions which are indefinable literally in words, and says to us more than any words could express. And with all this emotional stress in the music there is not for a moment any forgetfulness of the conditions of the art, any indication of the idea that emotional earnestness can compensate for roughness of execution, except in one brief but significant passage, to be noted just now. This passes in a moment, however; in the main the composer never forgets, in this work with its poetic meaning, that he is writing music, and writing it for a band; the minute finish of the composition

is as remarkable as its expressive power, every instrument is treated in the manner most characteristic of its peculiar genius and most fitted to contribute towards the general musical effect of the whole.

What was that one passage, referred to just now, where the composer may be said to have momentarily forgotten or put aside the true conditions of musical art? It is the passage, well known to musicians, just before the return of the principal subject in the second part of the movement, where, while we are still occupied with the harmony of the dominant seventh, which is leading up to the return of the principal subject on the full chord of the tonic, the horn softly plays the opening phrase of the said subject, as if to draw attention to the fact that its return may be immediately expected :—



The horn plays the notes of the tonic harmony while the violins are continuing their parts in the harmony of the dominant seventh (the B flat of the bass has been sounded, but is dropped for the moment); the G of the horn clashes in an arbitrary manner with the A flat of the second violins; and young Ries, Beethoven's pupil, standing by while the master conducts at rehearsal, and feeling sure the horn has blundered, exclaims, "Listen to that stupid! Can't he count?" and narrowly escapes getting his ears boxed for his pains. Yet I think the instinct of the pupil was right here. The design and movement of the principal phrase should have been anticipated, not the actual notes. Once admit that the logic of harmonic progression may be disregarded for the sake of an anticipation of this kind, and the door is

opened to a confusion and breaking up of the very basis of the art:

"It is the little rift within the lute."

The rift can hardly be said to have widened much in Beethoven's subsequent works, but it was an unsound precedent, and (whether I am singular in the feeling I know not) I never hear it without annoyance.

It may be doubted whether anything more complete at once in artistic form and poetic intensity was accomplished even by Beethoven himself since this first movement of the *Eroica* Symphony, the thorough comprehension of which in its artistic and poetic expression implies a great deal on the part of the hearer, and it is probable that in no general audience as yet is the full meaning and significance of this movement entered into by more than a comparatively small proportion of the listeners. Browning, in the short preface to *Sordello*, observes that his stress lay "on the incidents in the development of a soul"; and it is something of the same kind which Beethoven has attempted to shadow forth in this composition. It is not surprising that in the face of such a work critics even of the more thoughtful class should have been tempted to say that after this the theory of "music for the sake of music" was done with, and that nothing without poetic meaning could be listened to again. But it is not necessary to go beyond the *Eroica* Symphony itself to illustrate the danger of such hasty generalization. The *Eroica* subject is continued in the great Funeral March which follows, and forms the "slow movement" of the symphony, and which, in its great scale and perspective, and the intense solemnity and pathos which characterize it, suggests nothing less than the mourning of a whole nation over the loss of the hero, the contemplation of his glory, and his final descent into the tomb amid the subdued grief of the awe-stricken multitude. But the next movement seems to change the scene. This is one of the most typical examples of the new development which, as already noticed, Beethoven

gave to the third movement of the symphony. In place of the graceful quiet minuet of the Mozart symphony he substituted a style of movement of which both the character and the title, *Scherzo*, were entirely his own invention; a movement in rapid triple rhythm of much more piquant and picturesque character than the old form, and into which in some of his works he threw the wildest and most grotesque humour and *abandon*. The *Scherzo* in the *Eroica* Symphony has a certain relative seriousness and elevation of style in keeping with the character of the whole work, but it is difficult to connect it in any special way with the main idea supposed to govern the symphony: and when we come to the *finale* any such connection becomes perfectly impossible. This latter is a delightful movement to listen to, founded on a fresh and buoyant melody which had formed part of the composer's ballet-music for *Prometheus*, and which he had already made the theme of a set of variations for the piano, some part of the design of which is repeated in the *finale* of the symphony; but those who can discern any relationship in feeling between this and the noble first movement of the work must be possessed by a very strong predetermination to do so. The probability is that the conception and execution of the first two movements had occupied Beethoven a long time, that he desired to finish the symphony in order to have it presented to Napoleon at some special opportunity, that it must have a *finale*, and accordingly he did for once what he very seldom did (there are only one or two other instances in his entire works), worked up already existing materials for the purpose.

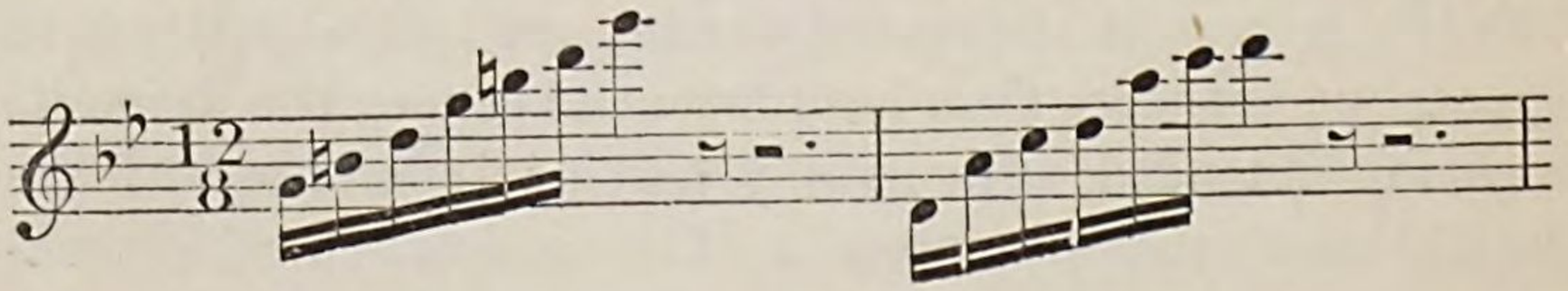
Thus the *Eroica* Symphony is incomplete as a whole; and, commencing on a "poetic basis," concludes with "absolute" music; and when we pass to the Fourth Symphony, we are still more struck with the contradiction to the assumption that Beethoven had established "poetic" music as a *sine qua non*. The Fourth Symphony goes back completely and frankly to absolute music essentially of the Mozart type,

though marked by Beethoven's richer fancy and more elaborate detail; it is a work completely classic in feeling, pervaded by that serenity and "blitheness" (*Heiterkeit*) which Mr. Pater has tabulated as one of the most essential qualities of Greek art; it is the most highly-finished and symmetrical orchestral work which the composer ever produced, and to my mind is in every sense one of the finest of his works, and much undervalued at present. The Fifth Symphony, the C minor, is as surprising a contrast in the opposite direction. There can hardly be a question that, as a whole, this is Beethoven's greatest symphony. It is, I believe, considered "Philistine" to say so now, because the combined simplicity and power of the work have made it popular, and caused it to be too much played and talked about: as if that affected the intrinsic merit of the music. Possibly no single movement in it is equal in intellectual interest to the first movement of the *Eroica*, but it has the advantage in being a more complete whole, and leading up to a splendid climax. It is obviously a work of poetic signification, though with no key beyond the recorded remark of the composer about the opening phrase of the first movement, "It is thus fate knocks at the door," the significance of which may, however, have been overrated. But no imaginative listener can have doubted that the whole work is a kind of portrayal of the conflict of life, perhaps an expression of the composer's own trials and hopes. The opening movement is full of turmoil, anger, doubt, resolution, brief gleams of beauty and happiness. The second, filled full of rich and passionate melody, we might perhaps call an idyl on a great scale, only that its suggestions seem too large and deep for the associations of the word. The *Scherzo* that follows is extraordinary, and if Beethoven had read Bunyan one might fancy it suggested by the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Half-seen, grotesque shapes seem to dance and gibber through the music. At length, after being greeted by the most strange moppings and mowings, we

find ourselves at the point where there seems to be a way out, to somewhere; *i.e.* we arrive at the passage eventually leading up to the *finale.* This is perhaps the most remarkable instance in existence of the power of mere abstract sound to influence the state of the mind. The feeling aroused in hearing it, that *something* is going to happen—something very extraordinary, but we know not whether for good or evil; that, whatever it is, we cannot escape it; that it is becoming more inevitable every moment—is so vivid as to raise almost a sense of terror. There is an almost dead hush of the whole orchestra; the drum commences a series of low taps, the violins begin, in the most curiously vague manner, to stir uneasily, as if something were being awakened out of sleep; the stir becomes gradually more marked, the unceasing drum-taps get louder and more persistent, till a rush of the whole band carries us fairly off our feet to the point where the opening chords of the final march, in the major key, break upon us like a blaze of light. In analyzing the passage musically it is easy to perceive how artfully the composer has heightened its effect by keeping the harmony vague and undefined till the last moment, so that we do not know, as it were, which way he is going to turn, and by masking the rhythm and accent of the violin passages so as to increase this vague formlessness; but the whole effect really defies analysis. It may be observed that, like all the surprises of genius, it is not dependent upon the novelty of a first hearing; it loses none of its effect with those who know it as well as their alphabet.

It is important to notice that this symphony, so essentially poetic in feeling, is thoroughly consistent and connected in form throughout; it is not so highly finished as some others; there are roughnesses in detail, and the first movement exhibits a certain degree of abruptness and angularity at times, but not more than is sufficient to convey the dramatic meaning intended, without any harsh interference with the conditions of musical expression. The final march, which con-

veys no doubt the idea of the victory and triumph over evil and sorrow, is one of the most broadly conceived, stately, and symmetrical movements, artistically speaking, in the whole range of music. Passing to the next symphony, the *Pastorale*, we again find Beethoven, as before, leading us to almost the opposite extreme from his last work, and doing something perfectly different from what he or any one else had ever done before with instrumental music; giving us the translation of landscape into the language of musical sounds. This symphony is the most popular of all with "the masses," because a definite idea is given for each movement, which can be readily laid hold of and followed; but it may be at once remarked that, from the higher and more poetic point of view, this more or less imitative symphony, the parent of what has been called "programme" music (music written to express and imitate sounds and sights which are not essentially musical) stands on lower ground intellectually than such works as the *Eroica* and C minor Symphonies, on lower ground also than the abstract proportion or musical architecture of which Mozart's symphonies and Beethoven's Fourth are such noble examples; and in one or two places the composer has dropped into mere musical punning. At the end of the second movement he allowed himself, most unwisely, and apparently as a kind of joke, to add a passage of direct imitation of the nightingale, quail, and cuckoo, not originally contemplated, and which is a blot on an exquisite composition. It is worth notice, in reference to this point, that in the previous portion of the movement Beethoven had introduced a phrase which he subsequently stated to have been suggested by the song of the yellow-hammer—that arpeggio phrase which is first introduced for the flutes, though it is afterwards made use of by other instruments.



This, it will be at once recognized, is not realistic imitation at all; it is the suggestion from the song of a bird, conventionalized into the language of formal music, exactly on the same principle on which a natural flower is conventionalized in order to form part of a decorative design. This is a perfectly different thing from the addition which Beethoven unfortunately made at the close of the movement; in which he selected birds whose notes could be very closely imitated in music, and produced a realistic imitation of them. This was doubly a mistake, for, if they were to be introduced at all, they should have been incorporated with the whole design of the composition, not crowded together at the end as an obvious afterthought. The most irritating thing about the matter is that this ill-judged addition is always picked out by the "long ears" in an audience as matter for special delight.

In the Storm movement, again, parts of which are magnificently and poetically suggestive, the composer has introduced that series of rapid groups of four notes for the double-basses against five for the violoncellos (see page 106), to be played in the same time, so that no two notes are sounded together, and a confused rumble of sound is produced. The passage passes over quickly in performance, and those who do not know of the device would perhaps not notice it; but it is a most dangerous precedent, another instance of the "little rift"—a method which leads to something quite apart from music properly so-called. On the other hand, in the opening movement, which entirely bears out the composer's apologetic comment on the work—"More an expression of feeling than actual painting"—Beethoven has done wonders. He has expressed in music the impression which the sight and sound of a broad breezy summer landscape produces on minds quick to receive such impressions, so vividly and truly, that in walking through the country on such a day as that described in Tennyson's *Gardener's Daughter*—

> "Where all the land in flowering squares
> Beneath a broad and equal-blowing wind
> Smelt of the coming summer"—

I have even thought that if it were possible to consider the mental impression apart from its external causation, one could hardly distinguish between that produced by Nature herself and that produced by Beethoven's translation of Nature into music. No doubt we must allow something for the fact that the composer has given us the general indication of his meaning in the title of the work; it may reasonably be argued that without such indication the listener might not perceive so clearly the analogy; but when the composer says, in effect, "This is how Nature affects me," our own heart and mental experience respond to him at once, "Ah! yes, that is the very thing." It is as if we saw and felt Nature transfused through Beethoven's mind; and no one who had not the intense and reverent love of Nature which he obviously had could have achieved this result. The second movement, "By the brook," is equally beautiful and poetic (except the unfortunate bird imitations mentioned just now), the stringed instruments keeping up a murmuring under-current of undulating sound throughout, which, without for a moment suggesting anything like imitation, gives the same delicious dreamy feeling which the continuous ripple of moving water brings over us, while the air seems full of the hum and twitter of bird and insect life (not here imitated, merely translated into music), mingled with a song from the violoncellos which is the human element in the scene, and is the natural expression of the rapture of an overflowing heart. There are many compositions of deeper intellectual interest than this; it would perhaps be difficult to name another which is so running over with sheer beauty and rapture of sound and melody, reminding one of Shelley's lines—

"Sounds overflow the listener's brain
So sweet, that joy is almost pain."

In the *Scherzo*, Beethoven has introduced the humorous element in music, in his suggestions of a country merry-making, with great success in the first part of the movement,

in which he has fully succeeded in the difficult task of combining humorous suggestion with musical beauty; it may be questioned whether the success is equal in the middle portion, which takes the place of the *Trio* in the old minuet form. The humorous meaning is manifest enough, and one cannot hear that passage for the strings—



without thinking of one of Teniers's scenes of clown dances, fellows with thick clogs digging their heels into the ground: but whether it is "music" may be another question; a little of it goes a long way, and the composer, as if feeling this, does not impose it on us at any length. The "Storm" is the least successful part of the work, because of the difficulty of reducing any representation of a storm to musical form: a storm is disorder; if you reduce it to order it ceases to be a storm, and accordingly as a musical composition the movement is very vague and formless, besides the æsthetic sin before referred to, carried on by the violoncellos and basses in so unblushing a manner. On the whole, however, the composer has avoided the pitfalls of realism better than could be expected; his thunder is only suggestive, not imitative; the wind whistles wildly through the piccolo flute, but it whistles under regulation as to time and tune. The best part of the movement, however, is that which paints the coming on and the departure of the storm—

"Moaning and calling out of other lands."

The Song of Thankfulness which forms the *finale* is beautiful as to its leading melody, in which there is a happy mixture of rural simplicity of tune with breadth and dignity; but the movement is not up to Beethoven's highest standard of interest and

construction. There is something in the general feeling of the Storm and the succeeding movement which leads one to think that Beethoven had read the description of the thunderstorm in Thomson's *Seasons*, and been not uninfluenced by it.

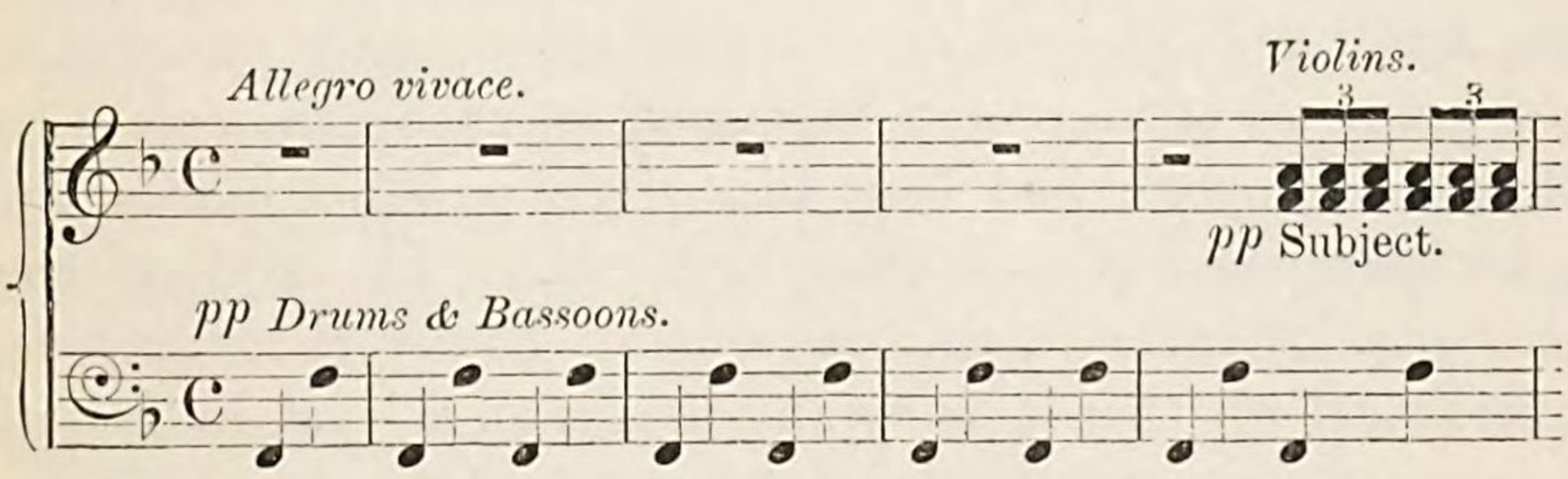
It is worth while to give some rather special consideration to the *Pastoral Symphony*, because it is the first important example, and by far the finest, of the use of instrumental music to paint external phenomena; for although the composer safeguarded himself by that reservation before quoted—that it was more a record of feeling than a painting—this certainly does not apply altogether to the *Andante*, and hardly at all to the *Scherzo* and the *Storm;* the latter especially is assuredly the painting of phenomena, and the result shows that all Beethoven's genius could not avail to give the artistic and intellectual interest to this which belongs to the others of his seven great symphonies. In this country the *Pastoral Symphony* is the popular one, certainly, with general audiences, but it is not the favourite with musicians, or with the best educated and most thoughtful class of amateurs.

As if to confute by anticipation the school of future critics who were destined to maintain that music with a "programme" signification was the only instrumental music worthy of attention, Beethoven had no sooner made this great experiment therein, than he turned completely aside from it again, and his next two Symphonies, Nos. 7 and 8, in A and F respectively, whatever we may choose to fancy to ourselves as to their poetic signification, are entirely free from the slightest overt hint as to any definite meaning. The Seventh Symphony, in A, is one of the greatest of all his works; and for the combination of finish of form with intensity of expression perhaps disputes the palm with the C minor, or only fails to do so because it does not rise to so grand a climax in the final movement. I have always imagined the first *Allegro* of this symphony to be intended to express

the spirit of chivalry ; there is a kind of trumpet call running through it, in such phrases as—



and in the *finale*, with its wild and almost furious energy, there seems to be a continual clash of arms. This may be only fancy, but the music seems to suggest this idea so strongly that I should expect to find it had occurred to others also, though I have never seen it suggested anywhere. The Eighth Symphony is a work rather peculiar, considering the position it occupies chronologically among the composer's productions; it is a late symphony of which the first three movements have the cut and style of an earlier period. The second movement, *Allegretto*, is a popular favourite, and no wonder, from its graceful yet piquant character and general tunefulness ; but the *finale* is by far the most remarkable movement of the whole, and is one of the most individual things that Beethoven has written : it is a perfect orgy of whim and high spirits, over some parts of which we can imagine the composer laughing to himself as he wrote them, especially the grotesque manner in which the return of the principal subject is preluded and accompanied by the drums and bassoons playing the upper and lower octave F alternately—





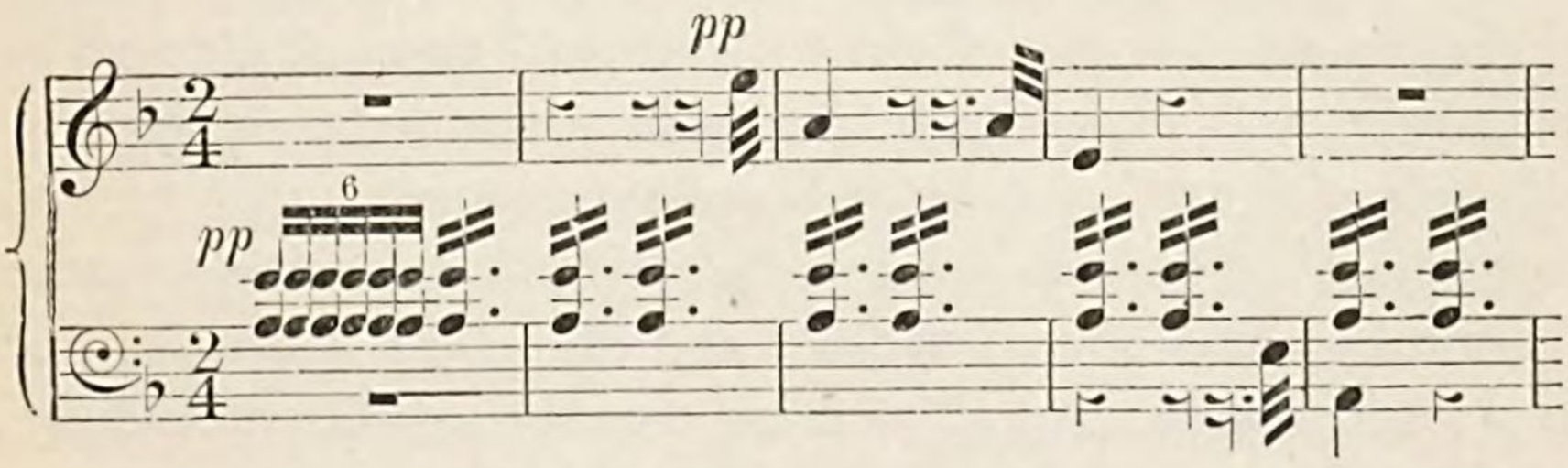
The humour of this passage consists entirely in the peculiar *timbre* of the bassoons and kettledrums heard together in this way, and in the grotesque effect which the rather rasping notes of the bassoon produce when alternating between the high and low octave in a quick passage of that kind; played on the pianoforte the passage loses all its effect; the originality lies in the way in which the instruments are employed; a good example of the essential part which *timbre* plays or may play in orchestral composition, where tone as well as tune is part of the design. The whole of this symphony is purely music for the sake of music, of the Mozartian type in that sense, and in many details even resembling Mozart, though in others it is far enough away from the manner of the older composer.

The Ninth and last Symphony demands more special consideration and comment, on account of its great scale, of the introduction for the first time, in a composition of this class, of a vocal chorus as an element in the climax of the composition, and also because it has been represented by modern criticism as a kind of landmark or fresh starting-point in the progress of the art. It is a work on a vast scale, occupying nearly twice as long in performance as any of the others, and the broad and far-reaching style of the opening movement, its great seriousness and sustained grandeur, show at once that the composer had bent his whole powers towards the accomplishment of something colossal. In spite of the elevation of style in this movement, however, it may be questioned whether it is by any means on a level, in regard to spontaneous inspiration and clearly-defined originality,

with the opening movements of some of the previous Symphonies—the Third, Fifth, and Seventh, more especially. With the exception of one magical phrase—

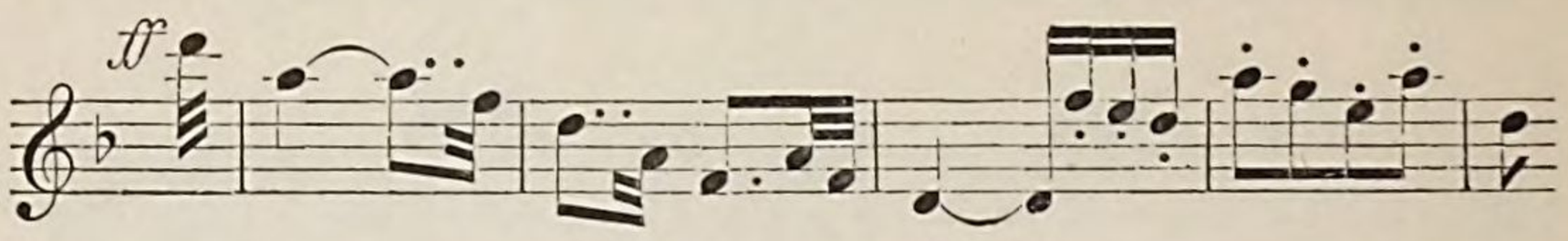


the movement is not characterized by that *haunting* quality of melody and effect which, in the case of some of the other opening movements referred to, seems to cling to the ear and memory for long after a performance; it is grand music, but not so pre-eminently beautiful as some others of the composer's works of the first order. Then, again, the sixteen bars of introductory matter (for such it really is), before we come to the actual subject, are a complete mistake, and form a very weak opening to a movement in so grand a style and on so great a scale. In programme commentaries this passage is frequently spoken of as part of the "subject"; a very shallow piece of criticism. It is nothing of the kind; it is a mere eccentricity of the composer, to pique the curiosity of his audience by toying beforehand with the first phrase of the real subject, leaving the ear at the same time without any clue to the real key in which the music is to be written—



The effect of the opening would have been far finer and more

impressive if he had started off at once with the bold unison passage which is the real subject—



instead of twitching the hearer by the sleeve in this irritating manner, before he is really ready to begin. The *Scherzo*, which in this symphony, as in some of the pianoforte sonatas, precedes the slow movement, is superior to its predecessors in dimensions rather than in other qualities; it is not equal, either in musical beauty or poetic suggestiveness, to the *Scherzos* either of the Fifth or the Seventh Symphonies, and there is an immense amount of repetition in it; such, however, is the extraordinary vigour with which it is carried on, and so effective the contrast of the galloping rhythm of the main subject with the chant in 4-time introduced as a *trio* (the finest part of the movement), that probably no listener ever finds it too long. The slow movement alone, to my mind, rises to the highest standard of musical beauty and pathos which Beethoven has attained in his greatest compositions. It is, in form, a great instrumental song in several verses, with occasional short passages (of which the opening phrase is one), which stand to the rest in the position of the instrumental interludes in an actual song. The "song" consists of a principal subject or verse, *Adagio*, which to some extent (as hinted on page 73) may be regarded as an example of the "variations" form of music, the song being introduced each time with a new and more beautiful elaboration of melody and accompaniment, until (if one may try to express so what is hardly expressible in words) the music seems almost to faint and die under the weight of its own loveliness. An alternating verse of a different melody, *Andante*, is twice introduced, which is even more beautiful than the principal one, but with different expression; an ex-

pression so intense, so poignant in its pathos, that when first introduced, played by the rich yet penetrating tones of the violins and violas combined, it sounds as if the whole sadness and longing of humanity were summed up in this one melody—

"Deep as first love, and wild with all regret."

It must not be forgotten, too, that with all this intensity of feeling there is combined the most delicate finish of design and detail in every portion. This one can appreciate and appraise with the æsthetic sense, though no mere words could do justice to the spiritual beauty of this movement; those know it who can feel it, and, as Browning says—

"The rest, they may live and learn."

If it were of such music as this that modern critics were enthusiastic in regard to the Ninth Symphony, I am with them heart and soul. But it is before the *finale* that we are especially told to do reverence, as not only the climax of Beethoven's Symphonies, but the last word of purely instrumental music; the practical admission, we are told, that instruments had said all they could, and that in future the musician must look to the co-operation of the human voice. As to this latter very curious theory, a word later on; let us consider first what are the intrinsic claims of this *finale* to the violent admiration it has received in recent days. Two ideas are embodied in the composition; the main and leading one being the musical expression of Schiller's "Ode to Joy"; the subordinate one being the corresponding negative idea, that we should refuse what is painful and sad, what is the opposite to joy. This general idea may have been intended to have some reference to the undoubtedly sad, pathetic, and yearning feeling of the beautiful *Adagio* which has preceded: that supposition is, in fact, the only one which supplies any obvious link between the *finale* and the preceding portion of the symphony. Beethoven unfortunately chose, however, to illustrate the idea in a more downright and practical

manner. He leads off the *finale* with a noisy discordant crash, commencing with the pronounced discord,



after which the violoncellos and basses, like the serpent in Eden, appear to take upon them human voice and expostulation, and remonstrate in a passage resembling vocal declamation. There are successive attempts made to bribe or soothe them, by the other instruments offering them successively passages from the themes of the preceding movements, each passage evoking a similar kind of quasi-vocal expostulation from the basses, until a phrase is played which has not been heard before, and which suggests the tune to which the first two verses of Schiller's ode are to be subsequently sung. This seems to be accepted by the critical basses, and the working out of it, first in four-part harmony for the strings, is proceeded with, and followed by its presentation by full orchestra. The meaning of all this is only fully apparent when we come to the following section, where the voices are introduced. Here the dissonant crash is repeated again, this time with an even more licentious violence,



and the passage is followed by the bass solo voice in recitative, declaiming "Friends, not these tones; let us rather sing a strain more cheerful," &c.; followed almost immediately by the singing of the first two verses of Schiller's ode, "*Freude, schöner Götter-funken,*" to the tune previously suggested by the instruments alone.

Thus we get the clue to the composer's intention, which could only be guessed at before. We perceive that he deliberately made a horribly dissonant noise with his orchestra in order to emphasize by contrast the idea of joy to be conveyed in the melody to be heard afterwards. Of course it may be argued that the collocation of notes used in that "crash" chord (or nearly all of them) could under certain circumstances be heard as a passing discord without violating musical logic; and I have even seen it asserted in a modern criticism (I cannot remember by whom) that the employment of this chord by Beethoven was only an anticipation of Day's theory, which regards all the sounds of the scale as derived from a common root. I can only say that no criticism could be more misleading or remote from the purpose. It is as patent as anything could be that Beethoven wrote what he intended and regarded as a harsh and arbitrary dissonance, in order to illustrate an idea; and I assert emphatically, with all reverence for Beethoven, that such a proceeding is essentially false, both musically and æsthetically. This is "the little rift within the lute" widened with a vengeance, widened to the extent of threatening to jar and destroy the music altogether. The succeeding recitative for the bass instruments, with its quasi-human expression, is a striking and characteristic passage; but has not a good deal too much been made of it? There is a semi-grotesque humour about it which is hardly in keeping with the highest and most serious form of musical composition. The melody to which the opening verses of Schiller's ode are set is, indeed, a noble and beautiful *motif*, remarkable moreover for its essentially lyrical character, so completely in keeping with the nature of the words; it is one of those immortal melodies which, once heard, one feels can never be forgotten or grow old. But the harmonized setting of this for the instruments, in the introductory movement of the *finale*, is really the only passage of pure and unadulterated musical beauty in the composition. The *allegro assai*

to which it is quickened when the voices are introduced robs the theme of its original dignity; the ode is broken up into short sections, with incessant changes of time and of design, which seem to proceed on no clearly devised plan, and point to no climax; the instrumentation is noisy; the chorus singers are kept at a continual scream, in passages too high to be conveniently sustained, and the work closes in a *prestissimo* which is a sheer scramble for voices and instruments. The causes of this unfortunate and undignified anti-climax to a symphony which (apart from the opening bars already referred to) started in so lofty and sustained a style, are probably twofold. A certain occasional tendency to eccentricity and vagary of form—part of the eccentricity inherent in Beethoven's character, but which his schooled artistic insight had repressed in most of his former works—seems to have asserted itself and got the better of him in the excitement of a new experiment in composition; and in the effort to give to Schiller's ode the ecstatic treatment which he seems to have aimed at, he overshot the mark, and landed in some part of his work sadly near the ridiculous. But there was also another element of difficulty in his deafness. This, of course, did not in the least interfere with his appreciation of the harmonic relations of his music—those by every great musician are heard with the ear of the mind—though it may perhaps be questioned whether, if he could have heard that particular "crash" in his *finale* above mentioned with the outer ear also, he would not have thought twice about it. But, in regard to *timbre* and balance of instruments and voices, it seems probable that his want of hearing must have misled him. He had now been almost completely deaf for some years, and it must have been inevitable that the remembrance of the real effect of instrumental and vocal sounds (as distinguished from their harmonic relation) must have more or less faded from his memory; otherwise it is hardly conceivable that he should have kept the singers at such a scream as he did, in spite of

the remonstrances of the accomplished vocalists who took the solo parts (and whose statement that the music was too high for any one to sing comfortably he evidently did not believe); that he should have instrumented parts of the *finale* in such a blaring and noisy manner: that he should have written that absurd succession of grunts for the contra-bassoon which precedes the *Alla Marcia* movement. I have not a doubt that he imagined these effects differently from the way we hear them; though he is, of course, fully responsible for the form of the composition. The reason for dwelling thus ungraciously, as it may seem, on the drawbacks of this composition will appear just now.

Having taken this rapid review of the main characteristics of Beethoven's great series of works for the orchestra, it may be suitable here to draw attention to the new chapter in the history of the use of the resources of the orchestra which Beethoven inaugurated. The essential feature in his treatment of the orchestra consists in the development of the special faculties of expression of special instruments, which grew up under his hand. They became with him far more individualized than before; not so far as the players are concerned, for it is in a sense part of the glory of orchestral music that it obliterates the personality of the executants. It is not to Mr. A. and Herr B. that we listen, but to the various voices of instruments which come to have a distinct though abstract character of their own, and which we learn to listen for as for the well-known accents of dear and familiar friends. Like the symphony form of music, the modern orchestra grew to its present shape almost accidentally, and through a natural process of development based in a measure on the principle of the survival of the fittest. For with Bach and his compeers a good many experiments were made in tone-colouring, and a good many instruments existed and were in use which gradually dropped out of recognition, either owing to difficulties and drawbacks in their manipulation, or defects in their voices, or the difficulty of inducing

people to give their time to mastering instruments which were used but seldom, and could not became remunerative to the player. In Handel's orchestra the materials were chiefly the bow instruments (violins, tenor violins or violas, violoncellos, and basses), called collectively "the strings," several of each being used; the oboes, also in his day used in a collective manner, some twelve or fourteen; flutes and bassoons; horns and trumpets (generally two of each), and two drums. This was a pretty fair muster for the period, and afforded considerable variety of tone, but the idea of what is now called "orchestral colouring" was not prominent then, and the instruments were mostly used *en masse* to produce a body of tone, except where one, generally either oboe or trumpet, was used as a solo instrument, or where oboes and violins were contrasted in alternating passages. It is curious that the trumpet, the manipulative difficulties of which are most formidable except in a certain class of simple phrases, was one of the most prominent solo instruments in Handel's day, and the difficulties which he made for it are now beyond the power of any but one or two exceptional players. As, however, it came to be perceived how greatly superior the bow instruments were, in freedom and facility of execution of all kinds of passages, to any other class of instrument, the weight of the work came to be thrown upon them; the oboes were reduced, like the other wind instruments, to two, and the orchestra consisted of a mass of stringed instruments, with the wind instruments to assist the *ensemble*, and to take up melodies and passages occasionally for the sake of variety and contrast of tone. Mozart wrote for what would now be considered a very small orchestra; and though he liked giving to each instrument pleasant and characteristic passages in turn, he made little direct attempt at increasing the expressive power of his music by special contrasts and combinations of tone. But with Beethoven this became almost a new art. The orchestra had been considerably strengthened in his day;

clarionets, the most beautiful of all wind instruments, invented in Mozart's day but little used, became first favourites with him, and gave voice to many of his finest melodies; the bow instruments were considerably increased in number, and had advanced immensely in their capacities of execution, so that intricacies of instrumental design were now possible which could not have been thought of in Mozart's time. But the great distinction in regard to the use of the instruments in the Beethoven symphony is the manner in which he derived a new source of sound-poetry from the contrast and combination of the various tones of the orchestra, so that the difference between his greatest symphonies and those of his predecessors is almost the difference between a picture in colour and a design in outline and shading. They have their deep shadows, their warm and cool tones, their glancing and glittering high lights, their foregrounds and distances. Again, quitting the pictorial metaphor, their multiplicity of expression is most remarkable. We do not seem to listen to a group of instruments playing together as one whole, but to a number of voices of various tones and expressions, which call and answer to one another, advance and recede, pursue and fly each other, are now silent while one indulges a soliloquy, and now take up one after another the thread of the discourse, or join in a tumultuous cry of sorrow or exultation. And what is perhaps most remarkable of all is the multiplicity, delicacy, and finish of the detail in these combinations of phrases and melodies. Audiences are apt to accept the effect as a whole without perceiving this so much; but a study of the score, or even an attentive listening to a work the general scope of which has become familiar, shows us that every note and passage in these intricate combinations is studied with reference to its effect on the whole, its suitability to the tone and capabilities of the instrument to which it is allotted, and its own special expression.

A few words must suffice to characterize what Beethoven accomplished in his pianoforte compositions, which are only

less important than his orchestral works. In one sense, indeed, his collection of sonatas for the pianoforte may be considered as even more remarkable than his symphonies. That through the medium of an instrument so comparatively restricted in its powers of expression (and it was even more so in his day than it is now, when the pianoforte has been so greatly improved in mechanism and sonority) any one should have been able to convey such a variety of poetic impressions of the highest order both in regard to imaginative power and intensity of pathos, is one of the most remarkable instances of the triumph of mind over matter. In regard to elevation of style and poetic inspiration some of the pianoforte sonatas are behind nothing that is in the symphonies, only of course they are on a smaller scale, and without the interest of such colouring and detail as an orchestral composition admits of. Allowing for this, however, Beethoven still occupies the position of the first discoverer of the real powers and capabilities of the instrument. Mozart has in not a few instances anticipated or suggested some of his special methods of treatment, but in the main Mozart was still under the influence of the style of the older keyed instruments, the harpsichord and clavier, in the first of which there was no expression and in the later little or no sonority or singing power. Accordingly the majority of his piano music still retains the old harpsichord style, where expression and variety are sought by means of ornamental scale passages, trills, shakes, &c. Beethoven retained all that was valuable in these older features of pianoforte writing, and turned them to excellent account in his own compositions as sources of brilliant and effective ornament to his themes; and in fact the admirable embroidery and decoration of his pianoforte music, so completely finished and artistic, is as remarkable as its more elevated qualities. He invented, however, completely new methods of treating the instrument, drawing from it broad masses of sound, either in full and sonorous chords, or by a kind of alternate battery of the hands upon

the key-board, evolving thus a species of effect peculiar to the pianoforte, and which no other instrument can possibly realize. But the greatest debt we owe him is for the lofty ideal of pianoforte composition which he established; for giving us the highest and most imaginative music in a form available for one person with a piano; for thus bringing, as we may say, symphonic music to our firesides. The player who would realize this must, it is true, bring imagination of his own to meet that of the composer; he must be able to apprehend, beyond the mere sounds which his instrument can produce to the senses, the greatness of scale and perspective, the richness of colouring, which are conveyed by the composer to those who can understand his indications, just as the sense of colour is conveyed in the work of a great etcher, though the actual material colour is wanting. Thus, in Beethoven's sonatas, though the forms and passages are those of piano music (and no pianoforte composer ever wrote more thoroughly in the style of the instrument), the larger ideas belonging to orchestral music are constantly to be felt behind the veil of the pianoforte forms. The true grandeur of scale of these compositions, however, is apt to be lost when, as commonly happens now, they are removed from the saloon to the concert room. "Pianoforte recitals" have become a passion of the day, and large concert halls are demanded for the audiences who attend them; but (as in the case of the quartetts) we are not hearing the music under the conditions and with the effect contemplated by the composer. The scale of the effects is calculated for small rooms, and becomes dwarfed in large spaces; it is as if we hung a cabinet picture in a public hall among large mural paintings. The consequence, in the case of the pianoforte sonatas, is constant overplaying to force the music to a larger scale, so that, in the expression of Lenz (*Beethoven et ses Trois Styles*),[1] "Aujourd'hui on ne joue plus

[1] Those who are interested in the subject will find some passages worth reading in this book, which, though a little too *prononcé* in literary style, is one of the most thoughtful and rational pieces of Beethoven criticism that has been written. It deals mainly with the pianoforte sonatas.

le piano, on le monte. Devenu cheval de cirque, de fougueux et intrépides cavaliers promènent ce pauvre piano aux yeux d'un public ébahi."

In the sonatas the three styles are more clearly traceable than in the symphonies, partly because there is a larger number of examples (thirty-three) from which to generalize. The Haydn and Mozart forms are very quickly shaken off, almost so in the Fourth Sonata (*Opus* 7), which is quite new in its feeling; but it is only when we progress farther that we discover what wild and romantic poetry, what great tragic scenes of love and sorrow, Beethoven could extract from the cold black and white key-board. The variety and individuality of these is as wonderful as their poetic power. Throughout the whole there are not two movements which in any essential way resemble each other, and it is not too much to say that there is hardly any mood of "the many-sided mind" which may not find its reflection here. But it is important to observe that here, as in the symphonies, we find the facts quite at variance with any theory of conscious or systematic development of the "poetic basis" principle. After some of the most distinctly poetic of the earlier sonatas, we find one (*Opus* 22) which is completely of the Mozart school in feeling; one, too, which the composer thought a great deal of, specially recommending it to his publishers as "a sonata of the right sort." Some time after the romantic Sonatas in E flat and D minor, we find the *Waldstein* Sonata, which, grand as it is, is essentially a great show-piece. The last sonata but one is essentially poetic, and contains an air preceded by a regular dramatic recitative, exactly like a solo sung by the heroine of a tragic opera; but the next and last sonata concludes with a great set of variations which are as absolutely music for the sake of music—*bravura* music, too—as anything of Bach's could be. This last movement has, in fact, so vexed the "poetic basis" people, that they have tried to get evidence of its having been composed some years before its publication; they are almost angry with Beethoven

for having done something which so obviously will not fit into their theory of him. But the composer's enjoyment of pure music and of brilliant effects of pianoforte playing comes out continually, even in the midst of his most essentially poetic sonatas. He attached a great importance to artistic finish in playing, and was most careful and painstaking in his indications of the manner and expression, the *nuances* of loud and soft, to be observed in the sonatas; and nothing could be more contrary to the composer's intentions than the way in which these works have been frequently played lately by pianists who, following the dangerous but now fashionable habit of trusting everything to memory, have stormed through his sonatas with a forgetfulness of *nuances* which would have driven Beethoven nearly wild if he could have heard them. It is characteristic of the serious way in which he took such matters, even in his later days, that in a letter to the person charged with the instruction of his nephew, he goes into details about the principle of fingering to be observed in a certain class of pianoforte passages; and Czerny relates that when he went to Beethoven for lessons, the great composer devoted the earlier lessons entirely to scale-playing and showing him the best position of the hand. Of course every first-class teacher in the present day would recognize the primary importance of a right mechanical method, but it is significant to notice that Beethoven's poetic genius as a composer for the instrument in no way led him to overlook the subject of a sound method of execution. The interest which he took in the executive part of piano-playing is well illustrated in a story told by his pupil Ries, which is worth quoting as very characteristic, and not so well known as some of the Beethoven anecdotes. Ries was to appear before the public for the first time as Beethoven's pupil at a concert, where he was to play the master's Concerto in C minor, and at which Beethoven sat by and turned over the pages for the young player. Ries says:—

"I had begged him to compose me a cadenza :[1] he refused, and told me to write one myself, and he would correct it. He was much pleased with my composition, and altered little, only he thought one very brilliant and difficult passage, though effective, too perilous, and charged me to write another. Eight days before the performance he wished again to hear the cadenza. I played the offending passage and failed in it ; he told me again with some temper to alter it ; I did so, but the new passage did not satisfy me. I studied the other valiantly, without, for all that, making myself absolutely sure of it. At the public concert when the cadenza arrived, Beethoven sat quietly looking on. I could not bring myself to choose the easier passage. When I boldly attacked the more difficult one, Beethoven gave himself a violent shake in his chair ; the cadenza succeeded nevertheless, and he was content, and called out 'Bravo !' which electrified the audience and gave me immediately a position among artistes. Afterwards, in spite of his evident satisfaction, he said, 'But you are very self-willed ! If you had broken down in the passage, I would never have given you another lesson.'"

It is in curious contrast, however, to his teaching, that all testimony combines in implying that in playing his own compositions he was rough and impulsive, and often made mistakes. His strong point was his extempore playing, which must have been extraordinary from what is said of its effects ; but he was evidently destitute of the coolness and self-possession necessary for the accurate rendering of written music, and probably his published works have been played by others with much more effect than he usually gave to them himself. It was the same with his conducting of the orchestra, in which, even before his deafness, he often confused the players rather than assisted them ; and at last his friends had to tell him, as kindly as they could, that his conducting would not do, and persuade him to relinquish the task.

[1] The *cadenza* is the point in a concerto where the player is allowed to exhibit his own powers by a brilliant effusion founded on the principal ideas of the composition. This used to be always an impromptu, but subsequently it became the custom to elaborate cadenzas beforehand. Beethoven in his greatest pianoforte concerto took the matter out of the hands of the player by composing a cadenza partly accompanied by the orchestra, but in other instances it is still left to the executant. Mendelssohn revived the custom of extemporising cadenzas, with great effect on several occasions.

It may be interesting, before summing up our estimate of his musical genius, to bring together here a few of the many recorded traits which help us to realize Beethoven's personal character. The bad side of it is soon done with, for it amounts to nothing worse than this—that he was a man of perfectly abnormal irritability of temper, which had never been checked or restrained by anything worth calling education, and which was aggravated during great part of his life by the peculiarly terrible affliction, to a musician, of deafness; and that in regard to all social restraints and conventionalities he was an absolute Bohemian. He cared neither how he dressed, nor how he ate, nor, if he was angry with people, how he spoke to them, or what was their relation to himself, either in social position or friendship, except that he seems to have kept his worst words for his professional friends. And yet, in one sense, even these very facts are a testimony to his higher qualities; for it is evident that, in spite of all this, he estranged very few friends. He might storm and swear at his best friends, call them "hound" and "donkey," invite them to dinner and then abuse them till they were compelled in self-respect to leave the table; but for all that they remained his friends. He had given them medicines to make them love him; it could not be else. The interest in his genius had, of course, much to do with it; but it was not only that. While all the fresh information that is gained about him brings fresh testimony as to his phenomenal temper and eccentricity, all we learn about him seems also to establish more decidedly his simplicity, honesty, and high moral purpose, and to confirm what is said by one of his contemporaries:[1] "I never saw a more childlike mind

[1] This and one or two other statements about the composer in this article are borrowed from Nohl's book, *Beethoven described by his Contemporaries*. Judging by his life of Mozart, Dr. Nohl appears to be one of the very silliest of writers that ever misused a pen; but that is his misfortune, and he has collected a number of facts and anecdotes of Beethoven, and as he is more bent on telling these than on uttering his own sentimentalities, the book is readable. It has been translated into English, in a bad literary style and with

in union with so much power and pride." His moral rectitude and uprightness seems to have been not so much the result of any conscious adoption of principles, as the spontaneous and unconscious goodness of a healthy nature. He was so honest in his own character that anything like deception, even in joke, excited his strongest indignation, while he was so little suspicious of double-dealing in others that any one could over-reach him; and his relations, who were a bad set (though not in all respects quite as bad, probably, as he thought), plundered him right and left. In little things it must be confessed that he was vulgar. He was constantly making very bad jokes, sometimes practical ones, and laughing obstreperously at them, but seems to have been very slow to see other people's jokes, and very quick to take offence at them if they were against himself. His pride in his own genius was great, and well it might be; he was thoroughly conscious of his powers, for they had been matured by severe discipline; and he was well aware that he towered over all his contemporaries. Ries gives a curious instance of his sensitiveness on this point. Ries had applied, on his friends' advice, for a musical conductorship which had been offered to Beethoven, but which it was well known that Beethoven neither had accepted nor would accept. The fact came to the ears of the great man, and Ries was denied admittance on several calls, but never guessed the cause till, after some weeks, he happened to meet Beethoven in the street, and the latter came up to him and said only, with the greatest scorn, "So *you* think you can fill a post that has been offered to *me*." During the Congress at Vienna in 1814, Beethoven invited the royal and noble personages to a concert given by himself, pretty much in the terms of one sovereign inviting others to his court. Yet in his social intercourse he hardly seems to have

a great many press errors. There seems a fate about Beethoven books in the English language. There are very few of them, and they are all, whether translations or originals, about as badly done as they can be.

realized that to stand on one's dignity as a man is an even higher thing than to stand on one's dignity as an artist. One of his recorded remarks is, "It is good to be with the aristocracy, but one must be able to impress them." This is rather sad; but still worse is his description (in one of the letters which that sentimental little minx, Bettina Brentano, elicited from him) of his meeting the Imperial family while he was out walking with Goethe, who was then at Vienna, and how he folded his arms and walked straight through the suite, and saw princes and pages form a line for him, and how he laughed at Goethe for standing aside and taking off his hat. This of course was simply bad manners, and he quite misunderstood Goethe, who cared as little for kings as any one, but who was enough a man of the world to know that dignity and good taste are best consulted by a reasonable conformity with conventional courtesies.

Like Handel, Beethoven never married; but, unlike Handel, he was very susceptible to feminine charms, and was in love over and over again. He would look after any pretty woman whom he saw in the street, in the most undisguised manner, merely laughing if she turned and noticed him. But in general the objects of his admiration were ladies of rank, who certainly seem to have given him no little encouragement sometimes, at all events very warm friendship; but nothing ever came of it, and it is easy to understand that refined ladies, however they might overlook his eccentricities in regard for him and his genius, might reasonably have thought twice about uniting themselves for life with so rough a diamond. Two or three letters, written to one of the most seriously adored of these female friends, are very beautiful, almost exceptionally so, as specimens of love-letters; and one or two recorded remarks of his in regard to marriage show so truly chivalresque a feeling and so high an ideal of married life, that it is sad to think he should never have realized it. He is said to have been so stern a moralist that he would not remain in the room with a man

of licentious habits; if that were so, his choice of rooms in the Vienna of his day must have been rather limited. It seems to have been at any rate the fact that he rated Mozart's *Don Giovanni* below the *Zauberflöte* because the former was "a scandalous subject," degrading to the art of music. This severity of tone, and the love-letters above mentioned, and the very pathetic letter he wrote to his brothers as his "Will" during a period of ill-health in early life, form together almost all in his personal life that we know of, which seems akin in temper and tone to the noble, dignified, and exalted character of his music. His letters in general are not remarkable, unless for oddity and a kind of joking which is hardly to be called wit: a characteristic specimen is the following portion of a letter to Hofmeister and Peters, the music publishers, who had communicated a wish for a sonata on some specified plan:—

"Does the devil, then, ride you all together, gentlemen, to propose to me to make such a sonata?

"During the revolutionary fever, well and good, such a thing might have been done; but now, when everything is getting into the old tracks, when Buonaparte has concluded a *Concordat* with the Pope—*such* a sonata!

"Were it a Missa pro Sancta Maria, *à tre voci*, why then I would immediately take up the pencil and write in huge semibreves a *Credo in unum;* but, gracious God, such a sonata in these new-fangled Christian times. Ho! ho! leave me alone, that won't do.

"Now, my answer in the quickest *tempo*," &c.

Among the various glimpses of his personality in later life may be mentioned that which Schindler gives of the composer on his afternoon walk, running rather than walking round the ramparts of Vienna, "as if pursued by bailiffs," with his arms folded behind him and his head bent down; and the account given of a visit to him in 1825, by an English lady, who sent it anonymously to a musical journal of the day in this country. This is one of the pleasantest pictures we get of Beethoven. She called by invitation in answer to her letter of introduction:—

"When we arrived he had just returned home, and was changing his coat: I almost began to be alarmed, after what I had heard of his brusquerie, lest he should not receive us very cordially, when he came forth from his sanctum with a hurried step and apparently very nervous, but he addressed us in so gentle, so courteous, and so sweet a manner, and yet with such a truth in his sweetness, that I only know Mr. —— with whom he can be compared."

He wrote the lady a little fugue as a souvenir, and she relates how he played it over for her, looking sadly at the piano which he could not hear, and saying he feared it was much out of order. The letter is appended to the English version of Schindler's Life.

Though, in the letter to his publisher quoted just now, Beethoven expressed his readiness to write a *Credo* "in huge semibreves," he had no relations with the Church, or with Church music as usually understood. As far as his religious feeling can be at all defined, he seems to have been what used to be called a Pantheist; at least, this would be the conclusion from the two first of the sentences, which he had copied out from somewhere, and kept constantly before him.

"I. Ich bin was da ist.

"Ich bin alles, was ist, was war, und was sein wird; kein sterblicher Mensch hat meinen Schleier aufgehoben.

"II. Er ist Einzig von ihm selbst, und diesem Einzigen sind alle Dinge ihr Dasein schuldig."

It may be fanciful, but I have often thought there was the same kind of Pantheistic feeling to be discerned in his religious music. In his two Masses there is hardly a trace of ecclesiastical feeling; in the second especially (a stupendous but unequal work) we seem to hear the worship of all nature rather than of the adherents of a special creed; and in the Hallelujah which closes the *Mount of Olives*, a chorus on a scale completely out of proportion with the rest of the work, there is a breadth and pomp of effect, entirely unmixed with anything of devotional feeling, which reminds us of the songs of the archangels in the prologue to *Faust* rather than of any possible Christian hymn. Christian feeling is, in fact,

entirely absent from the work, in which, as the late Henry Chorley truly observed, "Gethsemane is brought perilously near the footlights"; an objection, however, which, even as a matter of good taste, would probably be much less obvious to the orthodox German than to the orthodox Englishman. Beethoven had, however, no need of religious finger-posts to keep him straight; and he showed the best form of practical religion in his unselfish devotion to the orphan nephew who had been recommended to his care by a brother who had often behaved anything but well to him, and whose education and interests he looked after at the cost of money, time, and much that was most disagreeable to himself, with an affectionate solicitude that seemed to increase in proportion to the ingratitude and ill behaviour of the object of it. But he certainly never looked in his troubles and worries to what are usually understood by the consolations of religion. In one melancholy letter in reference to his increasing deafness, he says, "I have often cursed my existence. Plutarch has won me back to resignation." One of the last recorded expressions on his death-bed breathes something of the lofty irony of the old Pagan mind. "Plaudite, amici," he said to those around his bed, "comœdia finita est;" and though he received the *viaticum* in his last moments, we may hope that this was due rather to the officious orthodoxy of his friends than to his own choice.

A few of his opinions, briefly expressed on different occasions, in regard to other great composers, may be mentioned here. Haydn he never felt cordially towards; and in regard to Mozart he was very capricious, being sometimes inexhaustible in his praise of him, and sometimes dismissing his name with *double entendre* phrases which might mean whatever the hearer chose to make them. Weber, he said, "began to learn too late, and only attained the art of pleasing"; an admirable bit of comprehensive criticism. Schubert had "a spark of the divine fire." Rossini he referred to as "Chinese porcelain," and on another occasion characterized him as a

"good scene-painter": he refused to see him, though Rossini called two or three times, which was hard, considering that the Italian composer was an ardent admirer of his genius; but he might have been excused for some indignation at the fact of a Rossini-fashion being set up in the capital which had been so long irradiated by his own lofty genius. The stern and sculpturesque genius of Cherubini he greatly admired, and said that if he ever wrote a *Requiem*, he would take that by the great French-Italian musician as his model of style. In regard to a new opera (supposed to be one of Meyerbeer's early ones), he observed, "There must be such things, or what would the common herd do?" but he would perhaps have spoken more respectfully of some of Meyerbeer's later works. Bach he called "the patriarch of harmony," but he does not seem to have placed him in that lofty position to which some modern critics have advanced him. His greatest praise was for Handel, the study of whose scores (a complete set of which had been sent to him by the Sacred Harmonic Society) was his greatest consolation in his last illness. Of his recorded opinions in regard to Handel some account is given at the close of Chapter II. They may be instructively compared with the sentiments of the modern ultra-Teutonic school of critics, who regard the admiration for Handel in this country as a piece of insular Philistinism.

Beethoven's power and genius as an instrumental composer, a *Ton-dichter* (an appellation he delighted in), it would seem almost impossible to rate too highly: any reservations that can be made in regard to it would consist only in saying that he was deficient, in comparison with Bach and Mozart, in a certain kind of power the full possession of which is perhaps incompatible with the order of genius which was most specially his own. The severe logic of that kind of musical architecture called the fugue was foreign to his temperament, and the few colossal attempts at it which he made in his later works, astonishing as in a sense they are, only serve emphatically to prove this. Sir G. Grove describes in a

few highly graphic sentences the circumstances attending the composition of parts of the *Missa Solennis;* the composer "shut up in his room, singing, shouting, stamping, as if in actual conflict with life and death over the fugue 'Et Vitam venturi Sæculi'; his sudden appearance, wild, dishevelled, faint with toil and twenty-four hours' fast! These were indeed 'drangvollen Umständen'—wretched conditions—but they are the conditions which accompany the production of great works." It seems to me that they are exactly not the conditions which accompany the production of a great work of that class, and that these very conditions serve to explain the characteristics of that formidable chorus, in which the unfortunate singers are dragged, as it were, by the hair of their heads over all kinds of obstacles, and even the listener is left with a predominating feeling of thankfulness that we have somehow got safely through at last, and with certainly anything but a reassuring idea of "the life of the world to come." Numbers of Bach's fugues, organ and choral, and Mozart's *finale* to the Symphony in C, are greater works of their type than this, but one may venture to affirm confidently that neither Bach nor Mozart was ever found stamping and tearing his hair over them. Concentration of mind, and a calm but masterly grasp over the materials and the method, are the conditions of success in this class of composition, the Doric architecture of music. The *finale* of the huge pianoforte Sonata in B flat is a parallel example with the "Et Vitam" chorus; a portentously big, difficult, and chaotic fugue, which we are told to regard as his greatest pianoforte work simply because it is his biggest, but which I am convinced that hardly any among the audiences who listen to it from strong-fingered pianists at pianoforte recitals would pretend to find pleasure in, if they were not ordered to do so by the critics. In both cases the composer was grasping, with all the energy of his passionate nature, at something essentially foreign to his genius. They are among his mistakes, the grand mistakes of a great genius, to be heard with respect because

they are his; but when we are told to regard them as his greatest achievements, then let us put down our foot firmly, and say that we refuse to listen to such nonsense. In every other type of instrumental music Beethoven is superb, and accomplished not only far more than any one ever did before, but probably more than any one ever will again. He is one of the world's great poets, and he is (what has not been sufficiently recognized) in the handling of his materials as much a consummate artist and finisher, in all his best works, as an imaginative creator. This artist or craftsman side of his genius is brought out extraordinarily, and in a way that once would never have been suspected, in what his extant note-books show of the method in which his ideas were brought into form and elaborated. Melodies and themes which sound as spontaneous as possible, are found to have been in their first forms so comparatively commonplace that there is hardly a hint of the magic of expression which they assume in their final form, which seems to have been arrived at by a diligent and laborious process of gradual selection and elaboration. It is exceedingly strange to compare this with the obviously spontaneous process of Mozart's composition; very strange to think that so equable and scientific a musician as Mozart should have been the spontaneous singer, and that Beethoven was the laborious and painstaking elaborator. And this fact, and some of the scattered hints about the origin of his themes, seem to throw a significant light on what is called "poetic basis" in music. That Beethoven, as has been said, did in the *Eroica* Symphony and in some other works really write from the endeavour to express in music an abstract intellectual conception, capable of consideration and expression apart from music, is unquestionable; but it would seem that the importance of this element in his work has been very greatly exaggerated. Consider what is said about the beautiful Violin Concerto—that its peculiar and suggestive leading phrase, one note repeated four times in succession, was suggested by the

repeated knocking of some one seeking entrance at the door of a neighbouring house; that the leading phrase of the C minor Symphony, compared by the composer to "Fate knocking at the door," is also said to have been suggested by the notes of a bird (and both facts are very likely true); what do these and other similar stories indicate? Simply that, after all, a musician is a man who can put sound into beautiful, interesting, and suggestive forms; and that, whatever fact, however slight, serves to stimulate his sense of rhythmical and tonal proportion, may at once become a basis for almost endless developments of tonal design, around which great meanings may cluster, without it having been in any way necessary that there should have been anything that can be called a poetic idea to start with. The poetic idea makes itself as the work proceeds, just as Beethoven's themes made themselves in his note-book from bare and prosaic beginnings. The result may be something highly and poetically suggestive, which may mean a thousand things to as many different hearers, and the very value of which is in its emotional vagueness, expressing a beauty which words cannot express. The musical design may have arisen from this or that suggestion, serious or trivial; but what is that to the hearer? When the building is complete, what do we want with the scaffolding?

Still more wrong-headed is the idea, now so loudly proclaimed, that all Beethoven's work was a progress towards the perfecting of instrumental music by allying it with the human voice and with literary expression, as in the *finale* of the Ninth Symphony. The reader will understand, in regard to this, why I referred particularly to the successively varying character of the symphonies and sonatas, and to the eccentricities and want of balance and climax of the choral *finale* of the Ninth Symphony. To some the latter judgment will appear a mere profanity; but I have no hesitation in saying that to listeners of competent musical susceptibility, who were unfettered by *a priori* theories, the *finale* of the Ninth

Symphony would appear, when compared with that of the Fifth, for instance, as something radically inferior, something from which only a broken and doubtful enjoyment could be realized at all, and which in many parts is almost painful to the ear as well as bewildering to the judgment. Yet it is demanded that, in the teeth of our senses and our critical perception, we should consider this knotty and abnormal composition as Beethoven's greatest production, simply because the theories of certain people about the progress of modern music render this essential; and as the disciples of this theory are very militant, and have got a great deal of the current writing about music into their hands, they have a large following on the part of the public, since there will always be a number of people who will believe anything if it is told them in print often enough and positively enough. The principal origin of this perverse criticism is that it has suited a very strong-willed and self-asserting dramatic composer to represent himself as the necessary continuation and complement of Beethoven, and therefore it is necessary to represent the art of the latter as a continual progress from mere instrumental to choral music, from "absolute" music to "poetic basis" music. How completely the latter theory is contradicted by the facts I have endeavoured to indicate in passing; for it has been one object of this essay to bring out what I consider the falsity of the view of Beethoven's art referred to, not because one need care in the least about one party in the musical world or another—art has nothing to do with parties—but because such a view of the objects of instrumental music and of the nature of Beethoven's genius I believe to be utterly and perversely false. Whether Wagner's form of music is or is not the regenerating influence to the art which he affirmed it to be, is not to the purpose here; the question is discussed in another chapter; but what is quite certain is, that his art is not the art of Beethoven, has not the same aims, does not rest on the same basis, and can only be made to appear to do so by arbitrarily distorting Beethoven

to make him fit into the place assumed for him. Connected with this heresy is the still more lamentable one, because more generally applicable in its error, that "progress" is a necessary condition of music or of any other art. Those critics who think that we ought to accept dutifully the abnormal qualities and deficiencies of form in some of Beethoven's later works, are never tired of reminding us that many of his earlier ones, now liked, were considered strange at first, and that there is no such thing as finality in art. Quite so; but they entirely forget the converse truth, that there is no such thing as inevitable progress in art, co-ordinate with study and experience, except in regard to mere *technique*, and not always in that. To assert that a musician so studious and conscientious as Beethoven must necessarily have been progressively improving to the end of his career, is to confound the conditions of artistic production with those of scientific progress. It would be true of a conscientious and successful physiologist, for example, that he must be always advancing, because each acquired fact in science is a starting-point from which to explore further. But when people betray such a radical confusion of critical perception as to speak and write as if the same reasoning could be applied to works of imaginative creation, it appears useless to say anything further, merely noting the fact as an interesting though rather irritating psychological phenomenon.

It is, perhaps, one noteworthy evidence of the inherent greatness and stability of Beethoven's genius, that even his admirers have not been able to write him down. From one cause or another, partly to be looked for in the defective literary organization of most musicians, which makes a pen as dangerous an instrument in their hands, to themselves and others, as a razor in that of a child, it is certain that hardly any great genius has had such an amount of nonsense and sentimentalism poured over his memory as Beethoven. The distortions which his artistic nature has undergone at the hands of critics (to use Matthew Arnold's expression) "not

at the centre of their subject" are even less ill-judged than the adulation which has been lavished upon his genius in its supposed moral aspect. Hardly anything that has been said of Socrates or of Christ equals the tone of solemnity in which Beethoven's moral greatness, and the future mission of his music in regenerating mankind, are spoken of by some of these zealous apostles. Beethoven was neither a Socrates nor a Christ; nor is music a moral agent, except in the indirect sense in which all high and intellectual pleasures are moral agents. Yet we may offer to his memory one tribute in regard to what may, in a certain sense, be called a moral beauty in his art, the result not of any sentiments which the music is supposed to convey, and which might be susceptible of endless interpretations if we once began to build morality on it in that way, but of the instinctive impression which we gather from it, and which our knowledge of the composer's life more than confirms, of work seriously meant and carried out with the deliberate and conscientious effort to do the very highest in the author's power with the gift that had been given him. Considered in this light, Beethoven stands out before us not only as the great and gifted musical poet, but as the earnest, single-minded, conscientious student and worker in his art, not, like Wagner, writing books and pamphlets to proclaim his own greatness, but content with doing the very best that labour and perseverance could accomplish, grudging no trouble in the effort after perfection, pursuing his path steadfastly and manfully in the face of exceptional trials and perplexities; a strong and honest man as well as a great artist.

CHAPTER VI.

SCHUBERT—CHOPIN—LISZT.

IT is not with any idea either of bringing out supposed analogies in their genius and character, or of planting them, like three Horatii, to defend the passage to any special critical theory, that the names of three musicians so diverse in their social and artistic character as Schubert, Chopin, and Liszt, are here linked together. The two latter had, it is true, some artistic leanings in common, besides being closely connected in personal friendship ; but this consideration only removes them more decidedly from the neighbourhood of Schubert. The juxtaposition of their names was, in fact, originally suggested merely by the nearly simultaneous appearance of Sir G. Grove's article on Schubert in the *Dictionary of Music*, and of English versions of Liszt's memoir of Chopin and Fräulein Ramann's memoir of Liszt. It may be added, however, as a rider to this practical excuse, that, if the subjects of this essay have not so many affinities as to warrant us in grouping them together, they are at least "full of most excellent differences," which in their very sharpness of contrast are not only picturesque, but in certain senses instructive.

In our estimate of the few artistic creators of the very highest order, the great poets or "makers" in verse and drama, in painting, sculpture, and music, we are content to accept their creations as the all-important fact of their lives,

and as subjects for study and elucidation rather than for criticism in the more bounded sense of the word. Their lives and characters are of interest because they produced such great works; we feel that all information connected with them shares the interest reflected from their artistic greatness, but the latter is the predominant fact after all, and minor details as to their lives do not much affect our judgment of them or of their works. And in most cases their art seems to have been to themselves also the one absorbing interest of life. Once in an age the world may see such a sublime unconsciousness as that of Shakespeare, or such an almost equally sublime self-consciousness as that of Michael Angelo, throwing off with indifference productions which were to be the admiration of the world, in the spirit characterized by Browning—

"Shall I be judged by only these?"

But these two instances stand almost alone. The great artists are mostly judged by themselves and by the world as artists. Titian was essentially a great painter, Beethoven essentially a great musician; and so supreme is their art over every other consideration, that if the very different private characters and lives of Titian and Beethoven could be transposed, their works remaining the same, our feeling as to their respective productions would hardly be affected in any way. It is otherwise when we come to the second rank of creative artists. In their company many questionings are suggested which are silenced under the supremacy of the *Dii majores*. We are conscious of limits to their powers, discrepancies between their aims and their attainments; we begin to consider the why and wherefore of these, and feel at liberty to distinguish and select, to take what seems successful in their productions, and pass more lightly over the rest. With the diminution of scale in artistic power, moreover, the personality of the artist becomes a more prominent factor in our estimate of him, and we feel

at liberty to weigh in the balance the comparative value of personal and artistic character. In one instance, indeed, a biographer, even of one of the greatest of painters, has had the courage to ask whether, if a man had the choice of being as great a painter as Turner, with Turner's education and manners, or a generally educated and courteous gentleman of only average capacity, the latter would not be by far the preferable lot.[1] Artistic and social questions of this kind are certainly suggested, though not with quite the same emphasis, in comparing the three musical biographies just alluded to.

The article on Schubert in the *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, by the editor, constitutes the most graphic account of the composer which we have in our language as yet, though, as a dictionary article, it gives a most disproportionate prominence to Schubert in comparison with the brief space accorded to some much greater composers. Sir G. Grove is essentially an enthusiast, and is apt to get so far carried away by a congenial subject as to give it, for the moment, an exaggerated value. In the case of Schubert there are special reasons why we cannot feel surprised that this is so. For it was owing to the enterprise of the editor of this Dictionary, and his idea that Schubert's unknown compositions would probably have a value proportionate to that of his known ones, that the MS. scores of the symphonies were disinterred from their burial-ground in a dusty cupboard at Vienna, and in due time performed at the Crystal Palace concerts, for which the fortunate discoverer of the Schubert MSS. for so many years furnished the literary commentaries which have given a certain popular interest to the Crystal Palace concert programmes. But the admission of all that Sir G. Grove claims for Schubert as a composer would be tantamount to lowering very much the standard and requirements of instrumental music of the highest class; and, without grudging him his private pleasure and satisfaction

[1] Mr. Hamerton, in some papers on Turner published in the *Portfolio*.

in the contemplation of his Schubert, I must candidly aver, not only that I do not share this enthusiasm to anything like the same extent, but that I think it desirable, in the interests of a true musical criticism, that musical readers generally should not share it, or at least that they should be admonished to think twice before doing so, for the reasons hereinafter set forth.

For estimating the personal character and acquirements of Schubert Sir G. Grove has given us adequate materials in his article; and a very pathetic story it is. Artistically Schubert comes before us in it as almost the typical example of the self-taught genius, with the reservation, however, that he did not teach himself enough. There could hardly be, in one sense, a more direct practical negative than he furnishes to the famous definition of genius as "an infinite capacity for taking pains"; for his genius was unquestionable, if there is any meaning in the word at all, but taking pains would seem to have been as impossible to him as, up to a certain point, it was unnecessary. Yet what his career really exemplifies is, not that the aforesaid definition is false, but that it is only half the truth, and that genius without taking pains will never achieve a grasp of the highest capabilities of art. Of spontaneous musical ability, or what is sometimes called musical inspiration, Schubert had an unusual share; and Sir G. Grove suggests that, had but a portion of the pains been bestowed upon his musical education which was lavished on that of Mozart and Mendelssohn, "he would have gained that control over the prodigious spontaneity of his genius which is his only want, and have risen to the highest level in all departments of composition, as he did in song-writing." Unfortunately his whole life contradicts any such supposition. He never would have worked. He did not want cautions from his friends as to his neglect of systematic study—cautions which seem to have been among the very few things that ever made him angry. He had spoken of entering on a serious course of study shortly before his death,

but it may be doubted whether he ever would have carried out his intention had his life been spared. It was not in him to do so. He once stirred himself up to examine the manuscript score of *Fidelio* with a view of profiting by Beethoven's method of working out and maturing his ideas, but soon broke off impatiently with the remark that the music "seemed just as good to him at first as at last, and that he could see no use in such drudgery." His attitude towards the art was throughout his life that of a very gifted amateur, who wants art just as far as he can get enjoyment out of it, and turns away at the point where hard work comes in.

It was of course only a very exceptional gift of musical ear, feeling, and perception that could have enabled him, with such habits and temperament, to accomplish the beautiful music which he has left in his songs alone, which are and will always remain his highest and most indubitable titles to fame. The testimony as to his natural powers appears in the earliest records of his musical life. His first teacher, Michael Holzer, the choir-master of the suburban parish of Lichtenthal (Vienna), where he was born, remarked that when he wanted to teach the child anything fresh "he always knew it already." At eleven he was first soprano in the Lichtenthal choir, and a few months afterwards was sent to the Imperial school for training choristers for the Court chapel, where he soon took a place in the band with pupils much older than himself, one of whom looked round one day to see who was playing so well behind him, and found it was "a little fellow in spectacles named Franz Schubert." The little boy in spectacles soon confided to his older friend that he had already composed a good deal—that he "could not help it," and would do it every day if he could afford to get music paper; one of the first indications of that sad spectre of poverty which dogged Schubert to his latest hour. His fellow-pupil (Spaun by name) managed that for him, and showed him other kindnesses. Schubert's home practice

in string playing had given him the start of the other pupils ; for his father, though a man of humble origin, possessed musical as well as other abilities, and had taught his sons as far as he could. On his holidays from the school the great delight of the family was to play quartetts, when the youngest became sometimes the critic, and if his father made a mistake, or repeated it when once made, Franz would say, timidly, "Herr Vater, there must be something wrong here;" a mode of correction in accordance with the gentle disposition which he showed throughout his life.

How the composer supported himself when he left the school and his father's home it seems to have been impossible to discover; but enough leaks out in regard to various passages in his subsequent life to indicate pretty well what was the general tenor of it; and anything less interesting or eventful it would be hard to conceive. Indeed, Sir G. Grove affirms that "no memoir of Schubert can ever be satisfactory, because no relation can be established between his life and his music; or rather because there is no life to establish a relation with. The one scale of the balance is absolutely empty, the other is full to overflowing." For what little there is of connected biography to be told, and for the connected and historical account of his compositions, the reader may be referred to Sir G. Grove's pages. But it is worth while, before saying a few words about his music, to put together here a few of the more salient traits showing what manner of man was Schubert, what manner of life he led, and what were his ideas about his art; for in a certain degree the very negativeness of the narrative has its own significance.

In regard to his ideas about his art, he seems to have had as nearly as possible none whatever; certainly his biographer hardly helps us to any. The record is all but a blank. In answer to Hiller's question, "Do you write much?" he replied, "I compose every morning, and when

one piece is done, I begin another." He could have said literally, with Goethe's minstrel—

> "Ich singe wie der Vogel singt,
> Der in den Zweigen wohnet"—

though it would never have occurred to him to quote Goethe, or any one else, in defence of his position, which was simply unconscious. Compositions once written were often never thought of again—"put away in a drawer and forgotten," as some one said of him. His biographer's description of him on this head may be quoted :—

> "The habit of writing to whatever words came in his way was one of Schubert's characteristics, especially in the earlier part of his career. With his incessant desire to sing, with an abundant fountain of melody and harmony always welling up in him and endeavouring to escape, no wonder that he grasped at any words and tried any forms that came in his way, and seemed to afford a channel for his thoughts. If good, well : if bad, well too. The reason why he wrote eight operas in one year was, no doubt, in great measure, because he happened to meet with eight librettos ; had it been four or twelve instead of eight, the result would have been the same. The variety in the productions even of this early year is truly extraordinary."

That the variety and quantity of work produced on that principle would be very great seems likely enough; but it is hardly the system from which one expects the production of work of a uniformly high class, even from a man of genius. Of the relative literary value of the words which he set to music he seems to have had no perception whatever.

> "He seems to have been hardly able, at any rate he did not care, to discriminate between the magnificent songs of Goethe, Schiller, and Mayrhofer, the feeble domesticities of Kosegarten and Hölty, and the turgid couplets of the authors of his librettos. All came alike to his omnivorous appetite."

Is this an intellectual use of the art of music ? The same charge has been brought against Rossini, and made a heavy item of accusation against him by critics of the modern school ; surely what is sauce for Peter is sauce for Paul, or

should be so. The matter is not mended, for our general estimate of Schubert, when we turn to what is recorded of his social habits and character. The virtue of humility he certainly possessed in a high degree: whether it be the most valuable virtue for an artist may be a question. We might name more than one man of artistic genius in one or another art whose wings have been clipped, and his career rendered a partial failure, by a want of belief in his own powers; and to describe Schubert as "the only great composer who did not think himself the greatest man in the world" is to imply what is very unjust to Bach, Haydn, Mozart, and Mendelssohn, none of whom could fairly be called vain or egotistical. Certainly his modesty was a remarkable contrast to the regal pride of Beethoven, but the contrast between their powers is pretty nearly commensurate. Is it sinful to suggest that, after all, humility is a somewhat *bourgeois* virtue? The theory at least fits Schubert, who was *bourgeois* to the backbone. The biographer's candid admissions about his idol in this respect are calculated to edify a cynical reader. "He was a true Viennese, born in the lowest ranks, . . . loving the society of his own class, shrinking from praise or notice of any kind." When he was engaged as teacher of music in the family of Count Johann Esterhazy, and passed the summer at their country seat at Zelész, "he is evidently more at home in the servants' hall than the drawing-room. "The cook is a pleasant fellow, the ladies' maid is thirty, the housemaid very pretty, and often pays me a visit;'" and so on, in his own words. But this was not to be wondered at when we consider the style of society he loved, and quitted with regret for the decorous household of the Count. When he lived with his friend Mayrhofer, Schubert was nicknamed "Kanevas," because when a stranger came into their circle his first question always was, "Kann er was?" ("Can he do anything?") Their amusements consisted of "sham fights, howls, rough jokes, and repartees." At another period of his life he seems

to have pigged together in a kind of happy-family fashion with two other congenial spirits, one of whom he called, with vulgar effusiveness, "seine Geliebte" (using the feminine termination); they had nominally their own lodgings, but often slept together in the room of one, and had common property in hats, boots, coats, and cravats. Speaking generally, his biographer says elsewhere :—

> "He was a born *bourgeois*, never really at his ease except among his equals and chosen associates. With them he was genial and compliant. At the dances of his friends he would extemporise the most lovely waltzes for hours together, or accompany song after song. He was even boisterous—playing the 'Erl King' on a comb, fencing, howling, and making many practical jokes. But in good society he was shy and silent, his face grave," &c.

The story of his running out of the house when, at an interview with Beethoven, the great man called attention to a fault in one of Schubert's compositions, is an example really of *gaucherie* of the same kind, rather than of any higher feeling. The biographer comments on it with the foolish question, "Which of us would not have done the same?" No man with proper self-respect would have done so; but self-respect is a flower that does not flourish in so coarse a soil as that in which Schubert was content to embed himself.

All this goes far to suggest a repetition of Mr. Hamerton's query in regard to Turner; but without entering on that question, we may ask, Is there any relation traceable between the style of Schubert's life and the style of his art? That there is something radically wanting in Schubert's art is a conclusion to which on one account we must almost desire to come; for, if we were to accept it as deserving all that is claimed for it by the creed of Sydenham, we must be forced to the conclusion that an art in which the best or nearly so can be produced, as Schubert's music seems to have been produced, without study, without thought or care for its

meaning, or for the value of the words, without what can be called intellectual perception, by a mere spontaneous process of letting composition run through to the end of the composer's pen, is an art of less intellectual value than we have supposed or would wish to suppose it. Now, one limitation of Schubert's art seems to be implied in that very sentence, in a letter of Liszt's, which has been often quoted, that Schubert was "the most poetic of all composers": a sentence on which too much stress has been laid as the offhand epistolary expression of a man who was not of a very calm or well-balanced judgment, and the real meaning of which it would be difficult to define. Had Liszt said "the most romantic of all composers," he would have come nearer to the truth, and perhaps to his own actual meaning. Schubert is more essentially of the romantic school than any other composer of at all the same calibre; and the romantic school means the school of fluent and passionate expression with deficient formative or shaping power. In all forms of art, it represents essentially the *dilettante* side of artistic production and expression: the type of art whose productions appeal often the most strongly to the emotions in the first instance, but, having little for the intellect, are liable to lose in effect in proportion as they become familiar. Schubert, as a musician, had (apparently through instinct rather than study) sufficient constructive power to handle successfully the simple and limited form of song-writing; and the majority of his best songs, as far as they go, are very perfect and finished in form. But beyond the limits of the song form he never seems to have had, or to have taken any pains to acquire, the power of marshalling his materials into a finished and proportioned structure, co-ordinate in all its details, as is the case with the more extended works of composers of the first order. Confining ourselves to the songs for the moment, it must also be said that, with a few brilliant exceptions, their very romanticism moves within rather narrow bounds, difficult to define in words, but not the less to be felt. It is the

romanticism of that somewhat heavy, melancholy, semi-mystical type, which was peculiar to the Germany of a generation or two back, which would gaze with sentimental tears at the splendours of sunset, and sing passionate serenades to *die Treue*, with its long hair blowing wildly in the evening breeze, and then indulge itself with an orgy of beer and tobacco; which could be amused with schoolboy pranks, and was as innocent of soap and water as of many other niceties of civilization.[1] The most favourable musical expression of this romanticism is to be found in Schubert's songs, and occasionally he rose quite above it, as in his noble "Ave Maria," a hymn for a solo voice which seems to have arisen out of a moment of genuine spiritual aspiration, and which is so clear of any special German mannerism of feeling and style that it might almost as well pass for Italian as German; it combines, in fact, the best qualities of both schools. But, taking Schubert's songs *en masse*, while we may admit that he almost made the modern German song, or at least raised it to the level of an artistic creation, and that he wrote a larger number of beautiful songs than any other modern composer, we must still find that, even in this class of productions, he rarely reached the highest range of feeling. Poor Schubert had no touch of the heroic or chivalresque about him, and the heroic note is not in his songs. A long morning with them, even with a singer capable of fully entering into their meaning, leaves one (*experto credite*) with a consciousness of having been overdosed with sentiment; of having gone through a great deal of repetition and mannerism, beautiful at first but cloying after a time; with a longing for something more bracing and manly in style and feeling. Many of Schubert's love songs are exquisite, in a sense; but they represent either merely rustic love, or that sad and clinging sentiment which belongs to the weaker and

[1] Schubert used to sleep in his spectacles, that he might be ready to compose the moment he awoke, either in bed or out of it. The inference as to the toilet is pretty obvious.

not to the nobler side of the passion. His songs, artistically, are much more equably rounded and finished than Schumann's, but he never rose to so fine and chivalrous a feeling as is expressed, for instance, in one or two of the "Spanish love songs" of the latter composer, or in some of the "Frauenliebe" and "Dichterliebe" series.[1] Of the peculiar beauty and significance of Schubert's accompaniments too much can hardly be said; they both support the voice and illustrate the poem; and in the best examples the voice part and accompaniment blend completely into one artistic whole, and neither can be thought of apart from the other. This is perfect art in its class, but it is not the most serious or important class, and does not in itself avail to place its author on the pedestal occupied by the few great musicians of the world, or to justify such extravagant expressions as his biographer indulges in, speaking of the concert where the "Erl King" was first publicly sung: "Think what the first appearance of these godlike pieces must have been! It was the rising of the sun! He is now an every-day sight to us; but how was it the first time that he burst in all his brightness on the eyes of mortals?" This would be bombastic enough even if spoken in reference to the greatest works of Beethoven; but when indulged in *à propos* of a song of which, except in country parishes, people are now almost as tired as they are of the songs in *Der Freischütz* (which belong to the same school of German romanticism), it is really too absurd.

That Schubert would, nevertheless, have been counted among the greatest composers had his larger works been of the same relative excellence and completeness as his songs, is hardly to be questioned. To have spoken of his symphonies and sonatas in the same breath with those of the really great instrumental composers would have seemed, however, twenty

[1] It is noticeable that the two love songs by Schubert which are the most manly and healthy in tone are both inspired by Shakespeare's words, viz. "Hark, the lark!" and "Who is Sylvia?" and it is remarkable how very English they are in spirit, musically speaking, the latter especially.

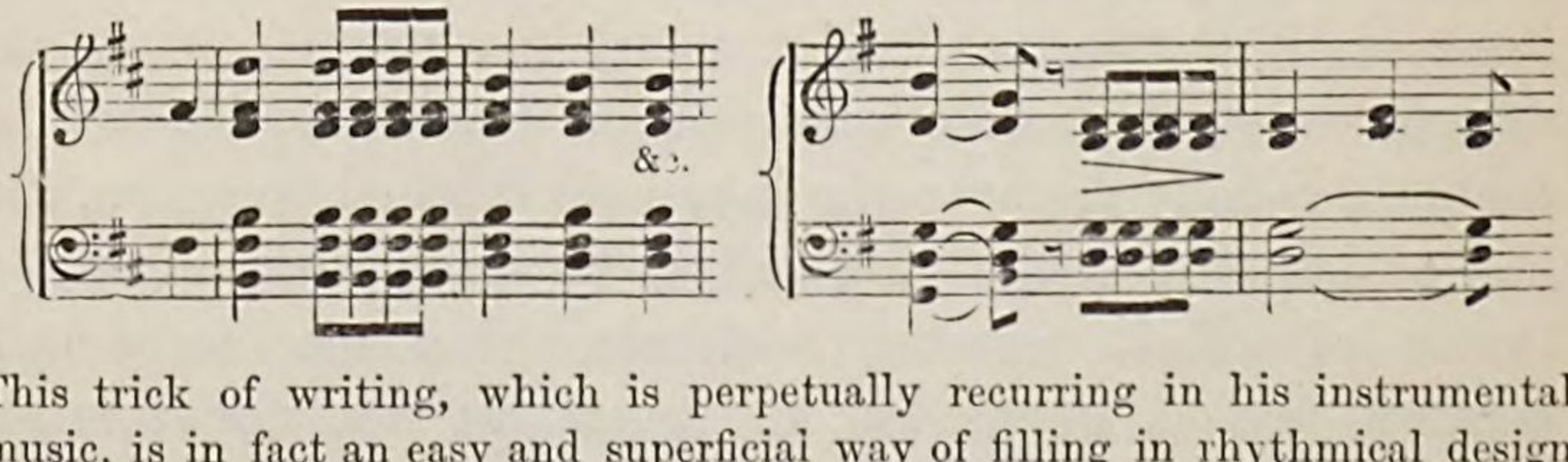
years ago, an absurdity. Of late years they have been diligently written up by certain musical critics, who have no doubt found a fair number of proselytes. The belief in Schubert's greatness as an instrumental composer is, however, a forced one; and the more the public learn about musical composition and musical form, the more certainly they will eventually find this out. In fact, the relation between Schubert's character and his music is illustrated more strongly in regard to his instrumental composition than in the other branch of his art. It is the work of a man who would write copiously as the whim seized him, but would take no trouble about it. It is urged by his biographer that Schubert was not an indolent man; the amount of his compositions, and the known fact that he was so constantly writing, being cited in his favour. But this industry was not of the right breed. The industry which consists in doing a great quantity of work carelessly, and in the way that is most agreeable to the worker, is only another form of indolence. Beethoven, as his note-books show, would expend more study and pains in rendering a single theme what he thought it ought to be than Schubert probably ever bestowed on a whole movement. The symphonies and sonatas of the latter are full of beautiful melodies, which succeed each other sometimes in almost lavish profusion, but of which, beyond their presentation to the ear, nothing is made. In his shorter pieces, which hardly go beyond the song form, the music is often not only lovely in itself, but complete in form, as in such a little gem as the well known "Moment Musical" in F minor, which is absolutely perfect; and one or two others of the same set are hardly less so. But in an extended musical composition in the sonata form something more than beautiful melodies is demanded. A grasp of the whole materials as subordinate to one complete design must be evident; the constituent elements of the composition must be linked together as parts of an organic whole, presented in new and varied combinations, so as to bring out all their latent expressiveness as well as their harmonic or contrapuntal relationship; a

method of handling which demands a constructive power such as Schubert never even sought to acquire. The consequence of his lack of this power is that the shrewd criticism applied to him by Vogl the singer, on first hearing some of his songs —"You squander your fine thoughts instead of making the most of them"—is tenfold more applicable to his longer instrumental compositions. Lovely melodies follow each other, but nothing comes of them; or he repeats an idea without apparent aim or purpose beyond the wish to spin out the composition to a certain orthodox length. Thus, in the slow movement of the Symphony in C, the leading theme (which is not one of his best melodies, being somewhat of the "sing-song sentimental" order) is repeated and repeated with little variation till the repetition becomes almost irritating to the ear. Compare this with the variety of treatment and effect which Beethoven has concentrated on the subject of the *Allegretto* in the Seventh Symphony, for example, and the difference between the master-workman and the *dilettante* is at once obvious. So important a composition as an orchestral symphony demands, also, that all the varied detail of the orchestral parts should have its own point and interest, its special reference to the main design Sir G. Grove has himself observed how remarkably this condition is fulfilled by Beethoven, so that his symphonies in their union of splendid total effect with multiplicity of carefully designed detail, seem almost like the products of nature rather than of art. But what is the value of this critical appreciation when we find the same admiration lavished on symphonies like those of Schubert, which have none of these characteristics; which are uninteresting and unpolished in their detail, and full of "vain repetitions" introduced merely because the composer wished to go on, and had no better way of doing so? The same criticism applies to his pianoforte sonatas, with somewhat less force only because less is demanded of music written for this less elaborate medium of expression. Take as an example the

Sonata in G,[1] which Schumann cited as the most complete in form of all the composer's works; a citation quoted with apparent approval by his biographer. The first two movements are heavy and loaded in style; the Minuet is charming; the Trio especially is one of those magical little inspirations, like the music of a dream, which come from Schubert in his happiest moments; but this, again, shows us how the composer could only do his best in pieces on a small scale, and in a simple and concentrated form. The *finale* is one of the most typical examples both of his melodic gift and his constructive weakness combined; the leading themes are charmingly melodious and spontaneous, but the different portions have no logical connection with each other; they follow and repeat themselves categorically; the composition has no backbone; it is very pretty, though very diffuse writing; but instrumental composition of the highest class it is not, and no rhapsodizing will make it so.[2] The moral is that which nearly all Schubert's more extended instrumental compositions serve to point—that in music, as in literature, easy writing is hard reading. The materials for exquisite musical structures are there, but the will or the power to

[1] This is the sonata which was misrepresented by the publisher (Haslinger) as if it were four different compositions—a Fantasia, Adagio, Minuet, and Allegretto. It is odd that this absurd mistake is kept up even in the English edition published under the direction of so competent a musician as Herr Pauer, where it appears in this form, and in the volume of miscellaneous compositions, instead of in its proper place among the complete sonatas. Blunders of this kind, once made, die hard.

[2] This sonata affords several instances of a common mannerism of Schubert's, viz. the repetition of the same chord in a kind of rhythmical battery :—



This trick of writing, which is perpetually recurring in his instrumental music, is in fact an easy and superficial way of filling in rhythmical design without the trouble of inventing melodic design.

combine them into an effective whole is wanting; and even those of his longer compositions which are quite balanced and symmetrical in form almost always affect one as too long, owing to their loosely-knit structure and want of *verve* and finish of detail; as Garrick said of Adam Smith's conversation, they are "flabby," and therein reflect their author's whole life and character. Schubert's life and works, indeed, suggest a lesson almost as much moral as artistic—that the most strong and healthy form of art, as of character, is not to be developed by giving one's self up to emotional impulses, however beautiful and attractive; that the strong artist, as well as the strong man, is he who is the master, not the servant, of his fancy and inspiration.

To pass from Schubert to Chopin is to pass to the opposite pole of the social and artistic world; from the Bohemianism of the *cabaret* to the utmost refinement of the *salon*, from the reckless lavishing of musical ideas in careless profusion to the production of a comparatively small number of nearly perfect works, elaborated and polished down to the minutest details. The catalogue of Schubert's compositions fills pages in the *Dictionary of Music;* that of Chopin's is compressed into one brief paragraph.[1] But, while we ask, on the one hand, how much of Schubert's easily-produced work will retain a permanent place in the art, we may ask, on the other hand, how much of Chopin is there that we could spare? and the answer must be, Very little; perhaps a smaller proportion than in the case of some really greater composers. Like Schubert, Chopin showed his best and most complete power within rather narrow bounds; but, unlike Schubert, he knew this and acted up to his knowledge; and, instead of thoughtlessly flinging himself on the whole field of music, he developed and polished his special talent to the highest pos-

[1] As if to emphasize the contrast, it may be observed that, while Schubert is awarded his fifty pages and upwards of effusive adulation, Chopin—a higher figure both as man and artist—is allowed to be disposed of in a couple or so of ill-written and flippant columns, a discredit to the Dictionary, like nearly all the contributions of the same writer.

sible point; and the few volumes of pianoforte music which represent the principal part of his life's artistic work stand alone in their individuality of style, their combination of intensity of expression with the highest finish of detail. He was professedly and avowedly what Schubert also was in reality, a specialist in the art, cultivating a particular branch of it only with effect and success. Schubert was essentially a song-writer, Chopin essentially a pianoforte-writer. A composer who is great only in one branch of the art, and seems to have developed a faculty specially to that end, can never take rank with those few great musical poets to whom every medium of expression comes alike, and who cannot but be great in whatever form and through whatever material means they make themselves heard. But there is often a peculiar interest attaching to the productions and the artistic style of these specialist composers. They exhibit to us in a more concentrated form the relation between feeling and means of expression in music; they present us with special developments of technique arising out of the special means of expression which they select; and in this latter respect no works in the whole range of music are more characteristic, more instructive, than those of Chopin, a born pianist (as it would almost seem), who developed, for the expression of his own peculiar artistic idiosyncrasy, a new manner and a new technique arising directly out of the character and capabilities of his chosen instrument, and such as could by no possibility belong to any other medium of musical expression. But, in addition to this special artistic interest, of which a word more presently, Chopin is one of the most interesting of all musicians in his social and personal aspect. He is almost the only one among the eminent composers who was in the best sense an aristocrat, not in mere pride or in the desire to be recognized by and to associate with "great people" (which has been a foible of artists in all ages), but in that sense of personal dignity and self-respect which made him feel above rather than below his art, in that gentleness and refinement of manners and feeling

which even among friends and in the most unrestrained intercourse always kept him within the limits of perfect good taste, so that, as his friend Liszt testifies, "he never made use of an inelegant word, even in moments of the most entire familiarity. An improper merriment, a coarse jest, would have been shocking to him." He showed that to be a true, even an "intense," musical poet of the romantic school, it was not necessary to trample upon all the *convenances* of refined society, and that the part of musical *virtuoso* and impassioned composer was compatible with that of a high-bred and polished gentleman and man of the world. As Liszt very truly puts it, Chopin, accustomed early to the tone of good society, had learned to perceive that regularity of forms "did not necessarily conceal petrifaction of heart"; that "the *convenances* and courtesies of manner, in place of being only a uniform mask, repressing the character of each individual under the same lines, rather serve to contain the passions without stifling them, colouring only that bald crudity of tone which is so injurious to their beauty, elevating that materialism which debases them, robbing them of that license which vulgarizes them, lowering that vehemence which vitiates them"—all which, though rather exuberantly expressed, is in substance as true as gospel; and, thinking thus of society, Chopin naturally was restrained from any of "that eagerness to drink the cup of phantasy to the very dregs, that stormy pursuit of all the changes and incongruities of life," which constitutes the essence of what is called Bohemianism, and has exercised such a strong and often fatal fascination over so many men of genius.

In quoting Liszt's study of Chopin, one need not accept unconditionally either the matter or the manner of his book. It contains a good deal of high-flown and overcharged sentiment, the effect of which is not improved, as the reader may have already perceived, by the style and diction of the English translation; and there can be little doubt that it emphasizes the impassioned and romantic side of the composer's character at the expense of some other

characteristics, and thus conveys an impression only partially true. We should hardly gather from it, for instance, what from other sources is evident, that Chopin was a man with a considerable vein of merriment in him, and efficient also in the delivery of neat and polished sarcasms. But, with all these allowances, we gain the impression, from the internal evidence at all events, that Liszt really understood Chopin, the inner and genuine Chopin, better than any one else who has written about him, and that he furnishes more suggestions towards enabling others in turn to understand the feelings which were at the root of and gave impulse to the peculiar form and feeling of Chopin's music than any other of his critics. Karasowski's biography and Liszt's study, taken together, afford us pretty good material for realizing Chopin's circumstances and character. His father was a Frenchman, who had transferred himself to Poland, and become Polish in his sympathies; and to this mingling of French descent with Polish education may perhaps be partly traced that union of Slavonic fire with grace and minuteness of finish which pervades his work. As a child, it is not surprising to read, he was so sensitive to music that he wept whenever he heard it. In his earlier musical career as a young man, he was before the public at first rather as a performer and extemporiser than as a composer, having acquired a command of his instrument in which he was equalled by few, though he never possessed, as he himself observed, the physical power requisite to rouse and command the homage of any but a sympathizing audience, and the preparation for a concert was, in his own words, "a dreadful time for me. I shut myself up in private and play Bach. That is my preparation:" a choice which shows how well he was aware of the educating power, both to fingers and nerves, of the great master of musical logic, whose style might have been supposed by many to be the very last to be adopted as a preparation for the performance of his own entirely different school of music. He was as exacting towards himself in

regard to composition as in playing, and "threw into the waste-paper basket many compositions which others would have been proud to hand to their publisher." His feeling in regard to show-playing in which there was more of display than of serious art, as well as his sarcastic humour, are displayed in his brief criticism on Thalberg, in a private letter :—

"Thalberg is here, and playing famously, but he is not the man for me. He is younger than I am, very popular with the ladies, makes pot-pourris on *La Muette*, plays *forte* and *piano* with the pedals, but not with his hands, takes tenths as I do octaves, and wears diamond studs. He does not at all admire Moscheles, so it is not surprising that the *tutti* were the only parts of my concerto that pleased him. He, too, writes concertos."

This remark may be compared with what Moscheles said of Chopin's own execution, that his soft passages were so delicate that no strong *forte* was required to give the desired contrast, so that he always preserved the relative proportion of strength in his shading, though unable to bring much physical power to his aid. His strictures on Thalberg's less delicate handling probably arose, however, mainly from a dislike to the popular pianist's artistic school ; for he had no such feeling in regard to Liszt, but on the contrary, liked to hear his own larger compositions played by Liszt, with a grandeur of effect which he could not himself impart to them.

As we put together the further traits of Chopin's character which stand out most conspicuously in the various accounts of him, they grow into a figure the grace and interest of which can scarcely be exaggerated. To the charm of his personal appearance, in its union of masculine and feminine traits, we have the testimony both of Liszt and George Sand, in her portrait of Prince Karol in *Lucrezia Floriani ;* and though she has been accused, manifestly not without reason, of exaggerating his mental and bodily fragility in order to give greater sentimental interest to her novel, yet Liszt

obviously does not consider her representation of his appearance and manners so much overdrawn as some have supposed, since he adopts her words occasionally in his own memoir. From the latter we gain, however, probably more truthfully, an idea of the peculiar charm of his personality, "stamped with so much high breeding, that involuntarily he was always treated *en prince;*" the impression of a character gentle and affectionate, but withal too proud and reserved to let any one into the secret recesses of his feelings; of a taste fastidiously delicate, drawn by a natural sympathy towards all that was beautiful in the world, happiest in the society of gentle and cultivated women, and next to them apparently caring for flowers above all other things except music. His favourite composer was Mozart, whose finish of form naturally attracted him; for Beethoven he had not the same unconditional admiration—he found too much of strife and turmoil in the great composer's more passionate outpourings, which he seems to have felt as disturbing that unity and balance of form in art which he loved; and in the same spirit he found Shakespeare too realistic for his ideas as to the province and limits of art.[1] In accordance with this temperament, it is not surprising to find that, in spite of his deep-seated and burning patriotism (which was, indeed, the moving spring of much of his music), he was no democrat; "democracy presented to his view an agglomeration of elements too heterogeneous, too restless, wielding too much savage power, to win his sympathies," an opinion in which, however it be in disfavour at the present moment, he has at any rate the countenance of Shakespeare. Liszt's further reference to his attitude in regard to politics may be quoted:—

"The reserve which marked his intercourse with others extended to all subjects to which the fanaticism of opinion can attach. His own

[1] In the closing days of his last illness, when he was passing away as in a dream, an English lady, herself a great mistress of his instrument, frequently played to him at his own request. As the end drew near he said, "Play Mozart. I can listen to no other music now."

sentiments could only be estimated by that which he did not do in the narrow limits of his activity. His patriotism was revealed in the course taken by his genius, in the choice of his friends, in the preferences given to his pupils, and in the frequent and great services which he rendered to his compatriots ; but we cannot remember that he took any pleasure in the expression of this feeling. If he sometimes entered upon the topic of politics, so fiercely attacked, so warmly defended, so frequently discussed in France, it was rather to point out what he deemed dangerous or erroneous in the opinions of others than to win attention for his own. In constant connection with some of the most brilliant politicians of the day, he knew how to limit the relations between them to a personal attachment entirely independent of political interests. . . . Sincerely religious, and attached to Catholicity, Chopin never touched upon this subject, but held his faith without attracting attention to it. One might have been acquainted with him for a long time without knowing exactly what his religious opinions were."

On the subject of his art alone he spoke, when necessary, or when any vital principle in connection with it was in question, with an earnestness, decision, and tenacity in maintaining his ground which surprised those who had regarded him as too calm and stoical to be aroused into keen discussion. This was what he felt as his peculiar mission, and he had no sympathy with any musician who did not regard the art as a thoroughly serious and almost sacred calling ; hence his bitterness against artists of the Thalberg school.

Around this grave, quiet, self-contained character, which was the basis of Chopin's nature, there flickered a lambent sarcasm, which could be used with some sharpness when he was in want of a weapon, but generally took rather the form of a good-natured and easy contempt for things and persons not answering to his ideal. His manner of showing this often reminds one of Heine, some of whose prejudices he shared ; his dry description of what he found in Scotland—"They are ugly here, but good, it would seem ; to make up for this shortcoming there are charming cattle, apparently vicious, perfect milk, butter, eggs, cheese, chickens, and such things"—might have come out of Heine's note-book.[1] In less trivial

[1] Quoted in an article on Chopin by Fr. Niecks, in a short-lived and now defunct musical journal.

fancies he and Heine seem to have had a mutual understanding, insomuch that the latter, though certainly no musical connoisseur, was greatly drawn to Chopin's music; nor did they

"Lack the scholarship to talk in tropes"

thereupon, and understand each other as well as "in the burghers' tongue."

In regard to the tragical story of Chopin's relations with a great literary genius of the other sex, it seems scarcely necessary to say much here—the subject has been discussed so often—further than this: that, whether in relation to the requirements of good taste, good feeling, or true and unselfish affection, George Sand's conduct appears to come out as badly as possible, balancing one account with another. True, she in the first instance nursed him through an illness; but it seems clear that her part in the matter was that of an imperious and passionate nature, seeking always after new excitement, and that Chopin interested her as a man of genius of a new order, whose love she required and obtained as a sacrifice to her own impetuous instincts, and cast aside when she was wearied of it, after having made use of the adventure to furnish her with the plot of a new literary work. She even by implication confesses this, with an almost brutal frankness, in the person of Lucrezia Floriani: "Certes, elle avait été aimée, et elle avait été aimée aussi très ardemment. Mais les organisations aussi exquises que celle de Karol sont bien rares, et elle n'en avait point rencontré." There is the whole history in a nutshell, and Liszt's account confirms it. One can hardly attach blame to Chopin, even according to the standard of conventional morality (which it is unnecessary to discuss here). He was simply a more weak and delicate nature drawn irresistibly into the vortex of a stronger one; and it is evident that he regarded the connection as practically equivalent to marriage, and would have been faithful to death had she remained unchanged. The account of their first meeting is given by

Liszt with more circumstance than elsewhere, and is graphic and picturesque enough. Chopin appears always to have thought of that period of his life as one of exquisite happiness, and even the anguish which he suffered when she drove him to the crisis she at last wished for, of saying in desperation that he would quit her for ever, does not seem to have interfered with his gratitude to her for having loved him; he never spoke of her without tears, and dwelt with a kind of bitter fascination on memories the brooding over which was, in fact, slowly sapping his life. According to Karasowski, George Sand had the almost incredible indelicacy to send him the proof-sheets of *Lucrezia* for his perusal and approval before publication. When he had read it, either before or after publication, his feeling was expressed in a manner in keeping with his always chivalrous character. His misery and doubt as to the connection had already commenced, but he said, "If I now desert the woman whom I formerly esteemed and loved, I make the romance a reality, and expose her to the blame, even the scorn, of the strictly virtuous." It is not necessary, however, on account of our feelings in regard to the woman, to depreciate the authoress, or to deny to *Lucrezia Floriani* its genuine literary merit, as some critics on the subject seem to have thought themselves bound to do. The book has many fine passages, and exhibits much power of character-painting, which might be better appreciated, certainly, if one could forget the cruel way in which the materials for it were acquired.

To come from Chopin's personality to his art, perhaps one of the most remarkable facts about it is, that a composer of such intense and passionate musical feeling should have voluntarily chosen to confine himself within the narrow limits of the pianoforte, an instrument which would seem so little adapted, in its essential character as a percussion instrument (which is what it really is), to give expression to the strain of melancholy yet voluptuous melody in which Chopin poured forth his inner soul, or to realize that delight in rich effects

of tone-colouring which is indicated in his compositions. It seems, at first sight, almost as if a painter of exceptional powers should voluntarily confine himself to etching or engraving, and to the indications of colour effect which could be conveyed in such a medium. But, though we have no definite information as to the circumstances which may have influenced Chopin's choice of his medium of expression, it would seem after all that, with a happy intuition, he had recognized the special scope of his powers. It is, at all events, unquestionable that the orchestral parts of his two concertos are deficient in interest and effectiveness as orchestral writing, though this may perhaps result not so much from inherent inability to make the most of the orchestra, as from the fact of his not having specially studied it. However this may be, the spectacle of a composer of such true genius voluntarily confining himself to such a limited means of expression, and proceeding to develop from it a new treatment, to impart to it, as it were, powers which it was not before known to possess, yet which are entirely in keeping with its mechanism, is certainly one of the most interesting which the history of the art has to show us. From an æsthetic point of view Chopin's treatment of the pianoforte is of more interest, and stands more alone in regard to form and manner, than even that of Beethoven, many of whose sonatas may be called rather orchestral symphonies in pianoforte form. But Chopin's pianoforte music is the music of the key-board, and no other medium could reproduce it. Liszt was evidently much impressed with Chopin's artistic attitude in this respect. In language critically true, though somewhat exuberant (as Liszt could hardly help being), he says:—

"In confining himself exclusively to the piano, Chopin has, in our opinion, given proof of one of the most eminent qualities of a composer —a just appreciation of the form in which he possessed the power to excel; yet this very fact, to which we attach so much importance, has been injurious to the extent of his fame. It would have been most difficult for any other writer, gifted with such high harmonic and melodic powers, to have resisted the temptation of the singing of the

bow, the liquid sweetness of the flute, or the deafening swells of the trumpet, which we still persist in believing to be the only forerunner of the antique goddess whose fickle favours we woo. What strong conviction, based upon reflection, must have been requisite to have induced him to restrict himself to a circle apparently so much more barren ; what warmth of creative genius must have been necessary to have forced from its apparent aridity a fresh growth of luxuriant bloom, unhoped for in such a soil ! What intuitive penetration is revealed by this exclusive choice, which, wresting the effects of the various instruments from their habitual domain, where the whole foam of sound would have broken at their feet, transported them into a sphere more limited, indeed, *but far more idealized !*" [the italics are my own]. "What confident perception of the future powers of his instrument must have presided over his voluntary renunciation of an empiricism, so widely spread, that another would have thought it a mistake, a folly, to have wrested such great thoughts from their ordinary interpreters ! How sincerely should we revere him for this devotion to the beautiful for its own sake, which induced him not to yield to the general propensity to scatter each light spray of music over a hundred orchestral desks, and enabled him to augment the resources of art, in teaching how they may be concentrated in a more limited space, elaborated at less expense of means, and condensed in time."

The half-sentence to which I have called attention in the above quotation, in regard to the highly-idealized form of expression which is represented by Chopin's pianoforte music, is too important to be lightly passed over. In the perception of that lies the answer to the criticism which would undervalue the pianoforte as too restricted and imperfect a medium for the representation of ideas and of a style so recondite and poetic as that of Chopin. The instrument is imperfect and bounded in its means of expression ; but that very imperfection may become the occasion of removing the musical idea further from the materialistic side of the art, into the region of abstract form and abstract expression, provided the listener bring imagination of his own to meet that of the composer. The pianoforte is mechanically the easiest and most convenient means of bringing within the grasp of one performer the combination of harmonic and melodic expression. Despite its narrow range in one sense, it has the advantage of moving more freely and equably within that range than any other

single instrument. Though deficient in the effects arising from variety of *timbre*, or from the power of sustaining sounds and giving a singing expression to a melody, it can at least represent any melody and any harmonic combination with almost equal ease and freedom. What is wanting in its power of expression must be partly supplied by the listener, whose fancy gives to the melody the sustained buoyancy and singing quality which the instrument mechanically cannot impart, and to the harmonies the warm or cool colouring of imagined shades of *timbre*. Imaginative music, uttered through this simple and colourless medium, thus affects the educated listener as much from within as from without, and the sounds which he hears with his outward ears become the abstract symbols of a tone-poetry coloured and filled in by his own imagination. In such a case, when the means of expression employed are restricted, the hearer's attention is more directly concentrated on the essential form of the musical idea, apart from all mere accidental means of heightening its effect; which is what Liszt meant by referring to the idealized form of Chopin's compositions. But Chopin provides for us a more delicate pleasure still, in the manner in which he has invented subtleties of style which are specially characteristic of the instrument he employs. Not only has he given us intensely emotional music for the pianoforte, but he has imported into it certain methods of handling and of evoking tone and expression, which, while not at variance with the highly-wrought feeling of the music, we feel to be peculiarly suited to the capabilities of the instrument, considerably extending its range of expression. The deficiency of tone-colour in Chopin's instrument was to be atoned for by what Liszt calls his "graceful and remarkable enlargements of the harmonic tissue," his peculiar and unexpected combinations, some of which would sound harsh and perplexing to the hearer if given in a more hard and decisive manner, but which, evoked by the light sweep of the

hand over the successive notes of the combination, in the manner which the pianoforte alone affords the means for, are floated to the ear with all their crudity dispersed, in a vague fragrance of sound which reminds one of Bacon's exquisite comparison between music and the scent of flowers.[1] The defect of sustaining or singing power in the instrument was atoned for by the invention of a system of expressive ornamental passages or *fioriture*, not imitated from those which are characteristic of vocal music, but producing the same kind of declamatory expression by means of passages such as bring out the most special capabilities of the instrument; passages in which the real elements of the melody are broken up into a chain of glittering points of sound, linked together, however, into groups, each of which is complete it itself, and seems like the expansion of a single note or phrase into a passing rhapsody of melody. The appreciation of this peculiar adaptation of the form of the music to the means of expression, while it demands special æsthetic perception on the part of the listener, repays him with special and refined pleasure. In no composition of Chopin's is this power of evolving dramatic expression from the piano, in a manner strictly in accordance with the genius of the instrument, more strikingly displayed than in that Étude in C sharp minor, commencing with the recitative phrase—



The whole composition seems the expression of a moment of intense feeling between two opposing natures; and the passage—

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[1] "The breath of flowers is sweetest in the air, where it comes and goes, like the warbling of music."—*Essay on Gardens.*


f
tr
11
fff
rit.
pp
sf p
pp
&c.

is essentially a piece of grand declamatory expression, but in a form totally distinct from vocal declamation, and such as can be expressed on the piano, and on that alone. In hearing such a composition as this we seem to be witnesses of some impassioned scene of the interchange of human feeling, where love alternates with poignant regret, tender and clinging reproaches with passionate denunciation, but a scene in which the expression of all these feelings has in some weird manner become transfused into the language of the pianoforte ; which presents to us the abstract elements of human emotion, disentangled from all accidents of time and place and specific idea, and expressing themselves solely through musical form.

Such a composition as that just alluded to represents, perhaps, the nearest approach which instrumental music can make to unfettered emotional expression, without losing the coherence of form, the loss of which in music is fatal to truly artistic character. In that and other such examples the coherence of artistic form is maintained by a resemblance of character and accent sustained throughout the composition, but which is to be felt rather than defined. In the majority of Chopin's compositions, in which a much more symmetrical construction of the whole is maintained, the freedom of expression in detail is kept in its place by subordination to a uniform and almost unbroken rhythm, which constitutes the foundation of the composer's delicately expressive and varied superstructure. Liszt observes how, in performance as well as in the actual structure of the music, this rhythmical basis was always kept by Chopin prominent and accentuated ; "all his compositions should be played with this accentuated and measured swaying and balancing ;" and Moscheles indicates the same idea in his different manner, in saying that in listening to Chopin's playing "we feel ourselves carried away as by a singer who, paying little heed to the accompaniment, abandons himself to his feelings." This is the key to the artistic form and expression of those exquisitely poetic musical reveries for which he adopted

the name of "Nocturnes," a name vaguely expressive of the character of a music only to be thoroughly enjoyed in the repose of the day,

> "While the amorous, odorous wind
> Breathes low between the sunset and the moon;
> Or in a shadowy saloon,
> On silken cushions half reclined;"

a form of composition of which Field had foreshadowed both the character and the name in his little-known works under the same title, but in a manner simple and *naïve* in comparison with the rich colouring and refined emotion of Chopin. For in the music of the latter the one quality which of all others is *not* to be detected is that of *naïveté*. Whether in these Nocturnes, in his mazurkas, sometimes sad and dreamy, sometimes bright and playful, or in the voluptuous *abandon* of his waltzes, the "note" is always that of the *salon;* it is the efflorescence of the poetry of culture in its most intense yet most polished form; not the self-conscious and superficial culture of the "æsthete," but the spontaneous artistic expression of a culture deeply seated in mental habit and association, the poetry of a society whose emotions must be expressed, however earnestly or fancifully, with grace and dignity, whose Muse strings her lyre for no untaught or rustic audience—

> "Far capitals, and marble courts, her eye still seems to see,
> Minstrels, and kings, and high-born dames, and of the best that be."

The prevalence of this peculiarly refined and (in the best sense) aristocratic tone in Chopin's music suggests a recurrence to the subject of the relation between the composer and his works, between man and artist, which has been referred to as a matter often of more interest in the case of the comparatively lesser than in that of the greatest composers, and which seems to be more exemplified in the case of Schubert than some of his admirers are willing to perceive. In the case of Chopin the parallel between artist

and man is so striking that the one side of him can hardly be understood apart from the other. He is one of the few eminent artists who may be said to have been first man, then artist; one who would no more have been regarded as a mere musician than Congreve was content to be reckoned as a mere author; and this relation between his circumstances and character and his music seems to have greatly struck Liszt, who occupies a considerable portion of his biographical study in elucidating what may be called the social groundwork of Chopin's peculiar style. Amid a good deal on this topic which is florid and sentimental, are interspersed hints and reflections which are at least very picturesque and suggestive, and illustrate Liszt's keen interest in the relation between life and art. In the peculiar combination of grace and playfulness with passionate feeling, which characterizes so eminently the mazurkas and waltzes, and in a less special degree the Nocturnes, Liszt sees the reflection in music of the character and manners of the Polish women, who inspire the spirit of the Polish dances, and on whom he lavishes an enthusiasm in which it must be admitted that he has the verdict of nearly all civilized Europe to support him. Only among them could be found, he says, those "divine coquetries" which run through the whole tissue of Chopin's music; only among them could a poet hope to find any approach to a realization of Chateaubriand's exquisitely *spirituel* fancy, the dream "of an Eve, innocent, yet fallen; ignorant of all, yet knowing all; mistress, yet virgin"; only among them that union of Parisian grace and culture with Oriental fire, of love and devotion with the passion for heroism. Of the pervading melancholy which is the background of so much of Chopin's music, even of that which is light and brilliant in outward form, Liszt relates the composer's own strange attempt at a definition, given in a moment of unusual breaking through of his habitual reserve about his own feelings, in answer to a question from a lady:—

"She asked him, what was the cause of the involuntary but sad veneration which subdued her heart while listening to these pieces, apparently presenting only sweet and graceful subjects, and by what name he called the strange emotion inclosed in his compositions, like ashes of the unknown dead in superbly sculptured urns of the purest alabaster. . . . He replied that her heart had not deceived her in the gloom which she felt stealing upon her, for, whatever might have been his transitory pleasures, he had never been free from a feeling which might also be said to form the soil of his heart, and for which he could find no appropriate expression except in his own language, no other possessing a term equivalent to the Polish word '*Zal*.'[1] As if his ear thirsted for the sound of this word, which expresses the whole range of emotions produced by an intense regret, through all the shades of feeling, from hatred to repentance, he repeated it again and again."

Goethe doubted whether the same words conveyed precisely the same idea to any two minds, and Chopin's "*Zal*" conveys to us no more distinct idea as to the intellectual or emotional basis of his music than we can gather from the music itself; but the anecdote is interesting as implying a confession on the part of the composer of the intimate relation subsisting, in his own mind, between his national and his musical feeling: and if Liszt is correct in saying that "*Zal*" includes the idea not only of regret, but of agitation and revolt, it serves to indicate a link between the originating feeling of the Nocturnes and mazurkas, and that of the apparently very different class of compositions called "Polonaises," which are among Chopin's most remarkable and characteristic productions. Liszt has a good deal to say as to the real character and meaning of these compositions, which he implies, not without reason, is much misunderstood. The name of the dance in its original form was masculine ("Polonais"), not feminine as in the adopted French form of the word; it was a processional type of dance in which for once the men rather than the women played the more prominent part, and which was "to display manly

[1] Janusz's Dictionary gives the equivalent of "*Zal*" as "*regret douloureux*," but with intimations of various shades of meaning. "*Zal*" seems to be to Chopin's music what we might say "*Sehnsucht*" is to Schubert's.

beauty, to set off noble and dignified deportment, martial yet courtly bearing." In these two latter epithets, says Liszt, "martial yet courtly," we almost see the Polish character defined; and could there, we may add, be a finer type of national character, than that which is summed up in these two epithets? And that type is faithfully reflected in Chopin's Polonaises. The less highly-wrought and intense compositions, which constitute the average type of Polonaise, suggest the idea of a brilliant and picturesque procession of men and women in rich costumes, of gay head-dresses and flowing scarves, the clank of swords and spurs, and the flash of diamonds; but with Chopin the march is not in the ball-room but in the battle-field. His Polonaise is Poland in revolt against tyrants, or in mourning for her sons who have fallen in the strife; for in most of the Polonaises the two feelings are blent or contrasted; nor is the feminine element absent from them. The turmoil and strife of one is interrupted by a graceful and delicate mazurka, like the surviving memory of happy days, soon to be brushed aside again in the conflict; in another, the great one in A flat, the shout of a whole people for freedom and fatherland is followed by the march past of the army, drums beating and colours flying, and the resumption of the song of liberty at the close. Of all Tyrtæan strains that have ever been written, this (a little hackneyed of course, now, through being overplayed) is surely the wildest and most stirring, while the heroic and chivalrous character of the principal *motif* raises it almost to the dignity of a martial hymn; "martial yet courtly," for even in his heroics Chopin always maintains the tone of distinction, of nobility, nor does he in this ardent piece of music ever for a moment lose his sense and grasp of artistic form; every note is in its place, everything is finished down to the minutest detail. Among the minor details of this great movement nothing is more remarkable and significant than the manner in which, towards the climax of the great *crescendo* passage which

seems to describe the gradual approach of martial music and the tramp of a warlike host—

"With the double double beat of the thundering drum"—

the composer suddenly, by an adroit modulation, brings the whole mass of sound a semitone lower—



as if the band suddenly rounded the corner of the street and came full upon us; an effect which (whether so intended or not) is actually in accordance with physical truth, for every one who has looked out for such effects must have noticed how the apparent pitch of musical sounds is altered by the nature of the obstacles interposed between their source and the ear of the listener. Had Chopin been known only by this and his Funeral March, which is equally grand in style, he would probably have been regarded as one of the greatest of composers, over the loss of whose other works we could only mourn. Taking his compositions *en masse*, one cannot but recognize that there is a limit to his range which must prevent his taking the highest rank; that he could only move freely in his own special path; and his concertos and sonatas, considered as wholes, show that the classic forms of composition somewhat fettered him, dulled the edge of his musical fancy, and interfered with the cunning of his workmanship to some extent. But he remains a remarkable and indeed unique example of a composer who has achieved all but the highest place by works on a small scale and written for an instrument in some senses very limited in its power of expression; while his character as man and artist forms an instructive comment on that form of vulgarity which regards

the possession of genius as an excuse for slovenly habits and uncourteous manners; a superstition which has done much, at different times, to separate art and society, to the detriment of both, but often much more from the fault of the artists themselves than the latter are at all willing to believe.

If Liszt, in the critical sketch we have been following, was guilty of some exuberance and rhapsodizing, a Nemesis has certainly overtaken him in the manner in which he himself has undergone biographical exhibition at the hands of one of his feminine admirers. The heading of one chapter—"Eros as a child of the Romantic"—will give the reader some inkling as to the sort of thing which he may expect to find in Fräulein Ramann's pages. The book is an example, in short, of the incredibly silly and tawdry sentimentalizing which is to be found in perfection only in musical biographies. The style of the authoress finds every justice at the hands of her translator, who seems to be a mistress of the Laura Matilda school of prose writing, and who furthermore enlivens her translation by musical blunders such as have been already noticed in regard to the work of another feminine translator of musical letters and biographies, and alludes to Beethoven's "Symphony in D sharp," and Mendelssoln's "Concerto in G flat." In short, the book is, from a literary and critical point of view, pretentious and absurd to a degree, and absurdly translated; and is only worth mention as affording a text on which to hang some comments on the artistic career of the remarkable man who is the subject of it.

Liszt was, perhaps, even more emphatically than Chopin, one of those artists whose personality was as interesting as his work; or, rather, his personality is fully as interesting as that of Chopin, though his work is (to my thinking) much less so. Critically speaking, he was, before all things, essentially a great pianoforte executant—the greatest that has ever appeared. In this respect he stood, during the period when he was still before the public in that capacity, entirely

alone. In illustration of the impression which his playing then made upon a hearer very well qualified to judge, I may quote here a few words of the late Henry Chorley, who was much in Liszt's society in his earlier days. Chorley writes (date 1845):—

"As a player, Liszt rises above his mates as something of a different genius, a different race, a different world, to every one else who has handled the piano. He is not to be considered among the great composers also pianists who have merely treated their instrument as an interpreting medium, but as a poet who executively employed the piano as his means of utterance, and materials for creation. In mere mechanical skill, after every one else had ended, Liszt had still something to add: he could carry every man's discovery further, could exhibit it in new forms. If he was surpassed by Thalberg in richness of sound, he surpassed Thalberg by a variety of tone of which the redoubtable and equable Viennese player never dreamed. He had his delicate, and light, and freakish moods (as when playing the 'Ständchen' of Schubert, or his transcripts of the *tarantellas* and *calascionate* of Naples), in which he may be remembered as another Chopin, for every quality of fancy, sentiment, and faëry brilliancy which made Chopin so delicious. In sweep of hand and rapidity of finger—in fire and in fineness of execution—in the power over those exquisite momentary fancies and graceful touches which, when the music admits of it, add so much to its charm—in a memory so vast and comprehensive as to seem almost superhuman—in a lightning quickness of view, enabling him to penetrate instantaneously the meaning of a new composition, and to light it up properly with its own inner spirit (some touches of his own brilliancy added)—in a mastery complete, spontaneous, enjoying and giving enjoyment, over every style and every school of music; all those who have ever heard Liszt frequently will join with me in saying he was unapproached among executant instrumentalists."[1]

In such qualities it was that Liszt excelled all his contemporaries in pianoforte playing. Nor has his successor in this respect appeared. He was as much a phenomenon as Paganini, and has been the only man in the pianoforte-play-

[1] From a collection of essays, published together in 1854, under the title *Modern German Music*, including some criticisms of real value and penetration (*e.g.* the chapter on Spohr), entitling their author to much more respect than his successors in the same field are in the habit of bestowing on him, though some of his musical judgments are now out of date.

ing world who, as an executant, could be regarded as holding a kind of parallel place with that of Paganini among violin executants. But to draw such a parallel unconditionally would be doing Liszt very scanty justice; for Paganini, with all his wonderful powers, was artistically a splendid *farceur*, and would be so regarded if he were to reappear in our present stage of musical culture; whereas Liszt, however he may for a time have enjoyed the display of his unequalled executive power and the adulation which it brought him, was always an artist with serious aims, and regarded the extension of the technique of pianoforte-playing as a means, not as an end in itself. He sympathized in reality so little with the tight-rope school of musical exhibitors as to have refused to make acquaintance with Kalkbrenner's *bravura* study for the left hand, saying impatiently that he "did not know it and did not want to know it"; and his plainly-expressed judgment as to the artistic value of Thalberg's pianoforte compositions has been completely confirmed by general musical opinion long since, though it must be admitted that he showed great want of taste and tact in publishing a criticism on Thalberg at a time when he and Thalberg were before the public virtually as rival pianists. The nature of Liszt's addition to the mere executive scope of pianoforte-playing was very different from that on which Thalberg prided himself. The special achievement of the latter consisted in the invention of the device of sustaining a melody in the middle portion of the key-board, by the help of the pedal, amid an accompaniment of arpeggios and other ornamental passages flying right and left; a device very brilliant and striking when new, but which was soon picked up, and has been long a commonplace of "show" pianoforte writers.[1] But Liszt's innovations were of

[1] Mendelssohn, with his characteristic alertness, picked up the effect at once, and introduced it as a new reading in the free arpeggio passages of Bach's "Chromatic Fantasia"; he describes this in one of his letters, observing that "the people say it is quite as good as Thalberg."

a much more robust and musician-like order than this. So far as they can be described in general terms, they consisted in a remarkable enlargement in the design and scale of pianoforte passages, so that a "figure" which with the old school of players would have been expressed in single notes, and in the compass of one or two octaves, becomes with Liszt a battery of double notes or chords spreading over great part of the key-board; the old simple arpeggio accompaniment to a melody becomes an elaborate device of interlacing chords bringing out all the body of tone in the instrument; everything in the form of the music becomes broader, ampler, and more sonorous; and so completely is this in the line of legitimate development of the capabilities of the instrument, that one can imagine that Beethoven, could he have become acquainted with this enlarged method of playing, would have re-written many passages in his concertos and later sonatas (the earlier ones he would not have thought worth retouching), in order to give his ideas with the added effect and power to be gained from Liszt's broader and more massive style of handling.

In this respect Liszt's best writing for the instrument on which he excelled every other executant will probably always remain as an example of what can be done with the pianoforte, nor is it very likely that any one will surpass him in the *exécution transcendante* which his *Études* profess in so many words to exemplify. But he had for many years before his death practically retired from the public profession of a *virtuoso*, and he and his admirers have demanded that he should now be judged as a composer. Possibly the time has hardly come yet to form a balanced judgment between the extreme repulsion which much of his music exercises upon some critics, and the enthusiasm with which it is admired by his partisans. That Liszt himself was actuated by a very serious aim in his compositions, there can be no doubt; the question is, whether there is not too much of serious aim, too self-conscious an intention to be poetic and original.

Liszt appears to have been, as a composer, one of those ambitious and strong-willed men who often figure in the decadence of an art, who are determined to be great and to make other people think them so, who mistake this determination for spontaneous power, and, in the absence of the gift of originating beautiful things, make unto themselves a theory of art, and set to work valiantly to exemplify it in their productions. That Liszt thus worshipped a theory is set forth in so many words by the author of the ecstatic biography before us. According to her, he was possessed with the idea of an ultimate escape from the domain of all arbitrarily measured intervals in music, of a system of harmony "arriving where the boundaries which separate diatonics, chromatics, and enharmonics fall, and the *ordre omnitonique* is reached, whereby each sphere of feeling will find its corresponding colour of tone." All one need say at present is that, as such an art of music would demand, for its very existence to us, a faculty in the discrimination of intervals such as our ears do not now possess, and would deal with sounds on a principle radically different from that of the art of music as hitherto practised, we can afford to adjourn the ultimate consideration of it *sine die*. The biographer avers that, acting on a belief in this general view, Liszt "had the courage of his convictions," and that "he always proved the soundness of his new harmonious" (harmonic ?) "combinations, and tried them in the light of the idea of truth" (whatever that may mean). That he had the courage of his convictions our ears may certainly receive undeniable though painful evidence from various passages in his compositions; whether he at the same time has proved the soundness of his "harmonious" conceptions, "the wise may make some dram of a scruple, or even a scruple itself." *Solvitur ambulando* is after all the ultimate test of any theory of artistic production; and Liszt's music, on the whole, does not "go." It has been a good deal nursed and advertised by special admirers in this country, a system which in itself disposes one to look doubtfully on the article

thus pushed, for all previous analogy shows that what is sound in art can make its way without advertising, and that this process is generally made use of to persuade people to like something against their will, or to collect a circle of sworn adherents from among the class who cultivate a taste for *caviare*. The device entitled the "Metamorphosis of Themes" has been specially developed by Liszt; a device which is in reality a contrivance to enable composers who have little power of spontaneous melodic origination to make one melody serve for a whole work, by cutting it up in various ways, and presenting it in various dressings. It is a kind of Mrs. Glasse's system of musical cookery, of which the initial precept is "First catch your melody," a part of the process which, with Liszt, as well as with lesser operators of the same school, appears to be the most difficult of all. Liszt's unquestionable successes in composition seem to have lain in the art of arranging other people's ideas for the piano in new forms and with new effects; the art of "transcription," or, as he called it, "partition pour le piano"; in other words "scoring" for the key-board. In this he was an unequalled master; but this is a form of composition which is in its nature ephemeral. "Arrangements" do not live long, more especially when they are made partly for the display of the special and exceptional executive powers of the arranger. Some of his "Symphonic Poems" for orchestra arrest the hearer by the intensity of passion which struggles to express itself through the thick folds of an involved and confused musical form; and the pianoforte Concerto in E flat will probably long be a favourite with pianists of the first force on account of the brilliancy and effectiveness of the solo part, while it displays a degree of artistic unity and coherence of form not to be found in most of his larger works. Of the others of the more important compositions which I have had the opportunity of hearing in execution, the pianoforte Concerto in A, and the oratorio, the *Legend of St. Elizabeth*, have left upon me (with the exception of some passages in the

latter) an impression of absolute musical ugliness such as I have experienced from no other music that I can remember: they suggest the phrase which Mendelssohn harshly applied, certainly with far less reason, to some of Schubert's instrumental compositions—"schlechte musik," "nasty music," as Sir G. Grove translates it. The stereotyped comment, of course, on such feelings is, that all music which has extended the resources of the art has been condemned at first. The reluctance to approve anything which is new in art is, no doubt, a persistently recurring form of Philistinism; but it does not seem to be sufficiently recognized that there is an opposite form of Philistinism, nearly as injurious to art—that which is capable of schooling itself to like anything to which it has become accustomed; and very often the critical sensitiveness which recoils from a work at first hearing, as false in taste, proves to be nearer the truth than the induration of artistic perception which will accept, on principle, what it has predetermined to approve. And in music there are, after all, definite physical boundaries which cannot be passed, and in relation to which all experiments in composition and effect must ultimately be considered. We may not decline still to hold a suspended opinion in regard to Liszt's place as a composer; but it is probable that when weighed in the inexorable balances of Time he will be found wanting, and that the idea that he is an important contributor to the world's possessions in musical creation will prove to have been a delusion.

Liszt's character may be said to have been in some respects as phenomenal as his artistic position. A musical prodigy, with a European fame, at a time when other boys are most interested with school games, he had even in his teens begun to think the career of a *virtuoso* unsatisfactory and beneath his aspirations, and to feel *blasé* and weary of applause; though it was not till years afterwards that he acted upon this feeling by retiring from public exhibition of his powers. Apparently a sincere and even

enthusiastic religious devotee throughout his life, he could nevertheless set at defiance public opinion in regard to conventional moralities, and seems to have been, in this respect as in his art, "a law unto himself." Impatient of all contradiction and criticism, and prepared to return blow for blow with interest to any of his opponents, he was chivalrous and generous towards his social and artistic allies, as well with his words and with his pen as with the easier, more showy, but also more practical generosity which exhibits itself in lavish distributions from a well-filled purse. Of his really princely munificence in this respect, the story of his taking on himself the whole probable cost and possible risks in relation to the Beethoven festival and monument at Bonn, when the affair seemed about to fall through from deficiency of funds as well as of energy on the part of those who had first started it, is only one among other instances equally creditable to him. Though, like Chopin, he was essentially a musician of the *salon*, and in some senses what is called a born aristocrat, he had no conventional respects or ceremonies, was ready to answer even a crowned fool according to his folly, and appears to have preserved throughout his life the pride which is displayed in his early determination—when left after the death of his father to shape his own course in life—not to allow his art to be stamped "as a source of amusement for distinguished society. I would sooner be anything in the world than a musician in the pay of great folk, patronized and paid by them like a conjuror;" a sentiment less frequent among distinguished artists fifty years ago than at present.

The second volume of Ramann's biography is partially occupied with the story of Liszt's rupture with the Countess d'Agoult, when "the contention was so sharp between them" that, like Paul and Barnabas, they parted in opposite directions—he to Vienna, she to Paris. On the story of this connection, the most important social episode of Liszt's life, it is as unnecessary as it would be unsuit-

able to enlarge here, though his biographer is troubled with no scruples of reticence in her book. But one can hardly help remarking on the strange social parallel between the experiences of Liszt and Chopin, each of whom went through an early and tender attachment which came to no result; each of whom was in later life captured—so to speak—by a *femme incomprise* older than himself; and each of whom had to see this connection violently dissevered with pain, difficulties, and heart-burnings. In either case *éclat* rather than affection seems to have been the moving spring on the feminine side. The probable nature of George Sand's feeling towards Chopin has been already suggested; and as to the other affair, Fräulein Ramann observes, with delightful *naïveté*, that, while Liszt had tact enough to feel that in making a concert tour throughout Europe it would be necessary to separate from the Countess, the latter, "whose mind was bent on travelling at the side of a man who was in constant intercourse with men of wit, elegance, and rank, would not, of course, see the necessity of this." The parallel fails in one important particular: that while Chopin's mistress drove him from her, Liszt was under the necessity of escaping from his, and did not achieve his freedom without some episodes not very consistent with dignity or self respect on either side.[1] Both stories, however, may be said to point the same moral, viz. that in the promotion of happiness and mutual respect between men and women in the most important relation of life, the prosaic expedient of legal marriage presents, even for poets and artists, certain advantages.

[1] During his visit to London, many years ago, he appeared one morning at the house of an old friend (from whom I had the story) much agitated, exclaiming, "She has come! She has come!!" In justice to Liszt, it should be added that he does not appear to have been influenced by fickleness or want of feeling so much as by a very excusable desire to "range himself," and to become respectable in the eyes of society: he would have been willing, if the Countess could have obtained a dispensation from her first marriage, to have entered into legal union with her; but the suggestion seems to have been received by the lady in much the same temper as that of Lydia Languish, when she found there was to be "no elopement."

This is "from the canon," perhaps, in pages dealing rather with music than morality. There is, however, an artistic as well as a social morality, upon which, as has been once or twice suggested *en passant*, some lights are thrown by the comparison of the life and works of the three composers of whom we have been speaking. The conclusion forced upon us is, that Chopin, who produced the least work and chose the most modest and restricted path of the three, is artistically the first and the most valuable to the world. He did not, like Schubert, dissipate his powers by rushing thoughtlessly and with a light heart into every department of musical composition; he did not, like Liszt, parade ambitious theories about his mission, or discover that "the true salvation of art lay only in a great religious and philosophical synthesis." He perceived early where his best powers lay, devoted his delicate and refined æsthetic perception to conscientiously turning those powers to their fullest account, and left a comparatively few exquisitely refined and original works, which place him higher than many composers of far more ambitious aims (just as a few square inches of canvas covered by Meissonier are of more value than whole walls splashed over by Doré), and the beauty of which appeals to, and can be fully appreciated by, only the most refined and cultivated class of hearers.

CHAPTER VII.

WAGNER.

THE following chapter originally appeared in the form of an article in the *Edinburgh Review*, of January, 1876, before any performance of the *Nibelungen* Tetralogy had been given, the Bayreuth performances being then only in preparation. The criticism undertaken was based, so far as the Tetralogy and *Tristan and Isolde* are concerned, on a careful study of the full scores of the works, which were then attainable. Subsequent acquaintance with the works by the hearing of the ear has not given me reason to alter any of the opinions I had formed from the perusal of the scores, except that some passages did not, in performance, equal the effect which the score had led me to anticipate. I have therefore left the essay nearly as it was written at the time, merely altering present to past tense where necessary. Some remarks as to further impressions derived from performance are subjoined at the close of the chapter.

The history of Art—using the word in its widest sense—is in the main the history of certain epochs of creative energy, manifested now in one, now in another, form or medium of expression, each of which has proved the birth-period of some one of the "fine arts," or at least the occasion of its highest typical development. Such were the periods when

the Greek artist embodied his ideal in sculpture which has formed the highest model of excellence for all after time; when architecture arose as the expression of the religious aspiration of the mediæval mind; when painting became the great power and pride of the Italian life of the Renaissance. Such epochs are usually of comparatively short duration; nor can they, as far as all past analogy teaches, be arbitrarily initiated, prolonged, or revived. The circumstances which led to the employment, at a given period, of a special medium of expression may be partly traced, but the creative impulse itself is beyond the reach of analysis. We can hardly assign any definite reason for the display at one time of such prodigality and power in some special branch of artistic creation, while a succeeding age of perhaps greater intellectual culture can produce with the same means nothing bearing the impress of originality or inspiration; but it would almost seem as if the discovery of a new and untried medium of expression were itself the most powerful stimulus to artistic creation, while after its development up to a certain point that stimulus ceases to operate, and a period of decay and stagnation inevitably follows. The art productions of such a period are permanent possessions—*κτήματα ἐς ἀεί*—but the power of reproducing their like is not bequeathed with them; and the subsequent continuation or revival of the same form of art is always, by comparison, tentative in process, uncertain in aim; the result of self-conscious effort and critical method, in place of the undoubting, uncontrollable impulse of the season of original creation.

Thus, of all the forms of art practised in the present day, music is the only one which is the result of an impulse and feeling peculiar to the modern period, and having no reference to precedents of a former age. It is true that in a certain sense the pedigree of the art may be traced further back than such an observation would suggest. Without counting the echoes of popular or of religious song which reach our ears faintly from more remote periods, we have the solemn interwoven har-

monies of the school of Palestrina, and the part songs and madrigals which gave a sober gaiety to the festivities of old English homes. But music has run a new and great career since Milton invoked the "Sphere-born harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse." Not to speak of the extension of their combined triumphs in oratorio and (with certain limitations to be hereafter considered) in opera, it has been long since discovered that the younger sister was not dependent on the elder—that Music had her own language and her own utterances apart from Poetry, and had strength and resources for pursuing her own independent course. Commencing with forms of composition appealing rather to the reason than the fancy of the listener—with expositions of the logical elaboration of themes according to a prescribed form and in direct reference to a scientific basis—instrumental music has gradually invaded the realms of sentiment and imagination, has extended and amplified her forms of expression, and called to her aid new resources in the tone-colouring afforded by the *timbre* of her various organs of speech, till in the symphony, as developed by Beethoven, we have some of the deepest and most intense expressions of poetic feeling which have ever stirred the hearts of mankind. After such a triumph an anti-climax was inevitable; and though we can by no means say that the poetic fire has been quenched—though new and genuine voices have spoken to us since then, if not with the same deep pathos, yet in tones which have the ring of original genius—we cannot shut our eyes to the signs that we have passed from the great period of spontaneous musical art into the literary and self-conscious phase which usually marks the decline of an art; the period of weighing and criticizing, defining principles and aims, which in past art history has always supervened when the minds of men, set free from their absorbing interest in the production of great works, have been at leisure to regard their art as a subject for speculation and theorizing. If, however, we find the present crisis in musical art characterized by this peculiarity

—that these very critics themselves proclaim the decease of music in regard to its hitherto accepted forms, while they point to a composer who, they maintain, has given renewed and even higher life to the art by leading its streams into a new channel; if this musical prophet has based his claims not only on critical writings displaying, in spite of some bigotry and onesidedness, a distinct and in some respects a consistent theory, but upon compositions of the most ambitious character in regard to scale and elaboration; if these compositions have found acceptance with a considerable and apparently increasing public—such a claim certainly merits serious and impartial consideration from all who are interested in the art.

The composer of the *Ring des Nibelungen* was for many years heard of in this country only as a kind of impracticable musical madman. We learned incidentally how Wagner had determined to extinguish operatic "stars" and put down melody; how he was his own poet; how he kept a king to pay for the performance of his operas. Peripatetic English critics, who had sat through performances of operas on the new system, brought home pathetic accounts of the manner in which they had been wearied—"insulted" was the word used in one case—by combinations of sound without tune, offered to their unwilling ears as "music." An engagement to act as conductor of the London Philharmonic Society, which it was supposed might receive some fresh impetus from what was certainly regarded as a sensational appointment, at one time brought Wagner temporarily into direct relation with the musical world of England. The connection was short; the Society and their conductor mutually failed to appreciate each other, and the latter shook the English dust from his shoes without having done anything to convince the insular Philistine of his claim to be regarded as the great musical light of the day. It was only at a late period in Wagner's career that, owing mainly to the exertions of the composer's allies among what may be termed the Anglo-

German musical colony in this country, it began to be admitted that there was at least more method in his madness than had been supposed, and that at all events, whether right or wrong, he and his friends were determined that he should be heard. In spite of the violent and almost rabid partisanship of the latter, however (which has made almost as many enemies as friends to the cause), we should probably have waited a good many years longer than we did for an opportunity of hearing any one of his works in England, but for the conviction—occurring, as it would seem, simultaneously to the managers of our two great theatrical establishments—that Wagner could be made to "pay"; a consideration which of course operated like magic, and we had the spectacle of two rival houses each playing Danaë to the golden shower, and crowds struggling for places to hear what a few years before would have been scouted as an absurdity. *Lohengrin*, which thus unexpectedly became the fashionable excitement of a London operatic season, was not, however, an adequate example of the general principle and tendency of Wagner's theory and practice in the art, which implies a more radical and extended overturning of orthodox notions on music than was suspected, probably, by the majority of the thousands who then went to hear what they regarded as merely a new form of opera. It may be most convenient, however, to examine Wagner's position as an operatic reformer in the first instance, before glancing at the wider bearing of the theory of music which he wished the world to accept as the future basis of the art.

Musical drama, commonly called Opera, is a form of art which has not been much in the odour of sanctity. Its logical basis, as a combination of poetry and music, has been little considered; and while the opportunities it presents for brilliant climax of musical and spectacular effect have made it always a favourite entertainment with the wealthier section of the mob (using the word in Fielding's sense), by the minority who take their pleasure thoughtfully it has usually been

regarded, in England especially, as an illicit union of music and drama, greatly to the dishonouring of the latter; and our literature, from Swift and Addison to Thackeray, abounds in gibes on the subject, intensified perhaps by the lack of musical organization and sympathy in the English literary mind since the Elizabethan era. But even in Germany, where opera has always ranked more as an art and less as a mere entertainment than with us, there has been a frequently recurring dissatisfaction amongst thoughtful critics with the one-sided principle on which the marriage of music with not very immortal verse has been carried out, and which was curtly summed up by Wagner in his definition of the popularly accepted idea of opera as "a tightly-built scaffolding of musical forms, to which the poetry was to conform." In other words, the primary object of opera having usually been to give opportunity for brilliant or passionate musical expression, with whatever additional effect could be contributed by spectacle and by free action on the part of the singers (which latter is a more important element in the effect of declamatory singing than is sometimes recognized), the result came to be that the musician had it all his own way (always with due submission to the singers), the story and situations being regarded merely as furnishing the needful opportunies for composer and singers to display their respective powers. As it was not to be expected that any dramatic poet of genius would move in these shackles, operatic *libretti* afforded in general only too good an excuse for the ridicule of the English critics before mentioned—for the sarcasm of Voltaire, "*Ce qui est trop sot pour être dit, on le chante*"—for the contemptuous wonderment expressed by Goethe at the "arrangement in some people's natures" by which they were enabled to enjoy beautiful music, though illustrating a miserable subject—for such a more serious and detailed arraignment of opera as that quoted from a German critic of the last century by Professor Ritter, whose two essays on opera, forming the fourth and eighth chapters in

his lectures on the *History of Music*, contain much that is suggestive in regard to this subject :—

"In that extraordinary spectacle to which the Italians have given the name of *opera*, there is to be found such a mingling of the great and the small, the beautiful and tasteless, that I hesitate in what terms to write about it. In the best of operas, we see and hear such stupid and trivial things, that we might think them only calculated for children, or for a childish populace ; and in the midst of their revolting silliness, passages occur that pierce the heart with horror, fear, pity, or refined voluptuousness. A scene during which we have forgotten ourselves, and felt the liveliest interest in the characters, is followed by one in which the same characters strike us as blundering fools, awkwardly trying to astonish and alarm a vulgar crowd. While we cannot bear to recall the senselessness which has disgusted us in the opera, we cannot help remembering its charming scenes with emotion, or without wishing that artists would unite to make of this great spectacle that perfect thing which it is capable of becoming. The opera might be the most powerful of all spectacles, because all the fine arts unite in it ; but it is a proof of the superficiality of the moderns that they have lowered, and exposed to contempt all these arts." (Sulzer, *Theorie der schönen Künsten.*)

These words are the more significant, inasmuch as the writer of them was nearly contemporary with Gluck, who occupied in his own day somewhat the same position in regard to opera as Wagner occupies now, and at whose work it is necessary to glance in order rightly to appreciate both the coincidence and the divergence between the modern composer and the one who is now habitually spoken of as his predecessor in operatic reform. The part played by the composer of *Alceste* and *Iphigénie* may be stated in his own words, which I again borrow from Professor Ritter's *History* :—

"When I undertook to set to music the opera of *Alceste*, I proposed to myself to avoid the abuses which the mistaken vanity of singers and the excessive complaisance of composers had introduced, and which, from the most splendid and beautiful of all public exhibitions, had reduced the opera to the most tiresome and ridiculous of spectacles. I wished to confine music to its true province—that of seconding poetry by strengthening the expression of the sentiments and the interest of the situation, without interrupting the action and weakening it by super-

fluous ornament. I thought that music ought to give that aid to poetry which the liveliness of colouring and the happy combination of light and shade afford to a correct and well-designed picture—animating the figures without injuring their contour. I have, therefore, carefully avoided interrupting a singer in the warmth of a dialogue, in order to wait for a tedious ritornel ; or stopping him in the midst of a speech, in order to display the agility of the voice in a large passage. I have not thought it right to pass rapidly over the second part of the air, when it is the most impassioned and important portion of it, in order to repeat the words regularly four times ; or to finish when the sense is not complete, in order to give the singer the opportunity of showing that he can vary a passage in several ways according to his own fancy. In short, I have endeavoured to reform those abuses against which good sense and good taste have long exclaimed in vain."

In these words Gluck indicates the nature of the æsthetic deficiencies in the opera of his day, and in a general way the extent to which he was prepared to go in reforming them. More particularly, it may be observed that he gave much greater space to the free recitative, a form of composition in which the music and words are more interdependent and more synchronous than in any other, and which indeed there seems reason to believe was the form in which musical drama first arose at the end of the sixteenth century ; and he employed the orchestra not as a mere accompaniment, a background of sound against which to relieve the voice, and with which to fill up the harmony ; but, by his characteristic use of special instruments, made it to some extent an element in the musical colouring of the scene, and in enforcing and illustrating the actions and feelings represented on the stage. It is also important to observe that he selected for the subjects of his dramas, almost exclusively, stories of a legendary character, drawn mostly from the great prehistoric tales on which the Greek drama was founded. In these two last-named points he may be considered as the direct precursor of Wagner. But Gluck did not carry the subordination of the music to the poem so far as to abrogate musical forms of composition altogether, and render the music entirely dependent for its motive and interest on the stage situation.

On the contrary, even in nearly his latest opera, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, there is an air ("O, malheureuse Iphigénie") which may be and is frequently transplanted to the concert-room, without losing, perhaps, much of its effect; and it is worth remark that it never seems to have occurred to Gluck that, on the principle of rendering the music strictly subordinate to the poem, there was no logical halting-place at the point at which he chose to stop. If it be a question of rendering music subservient to dramatic action, the shearing off of the conventional "repeat" of the air, and giving it a freer form, was only after all a half-way step. The problem, of course, really turns upon the question, What degree of conventionality is aimed at in musical drama? All dramatic art of a high class is conventional—is removed back from the plane of realism—and we require that the special standard of conventionality adopted should be consistently maintained. A perfectly logical scheme of lyrical drama may be framed, if we regard the music as only employed to illustrate, heighten, and prolong the expression of feeling at certain points, where it rises to a climax suitable for lyrical utterance; the intermediate or connecting links of the poem being treated in a more desultory musical form (recitative), chiefly with the view of preserving tonal unity and continuity. This principle is very nearly realized in such an opera, for instance, as *Don Giovanni*; indeed, the adherents of Wagner admit that the dramatic demands of opera (even from their point of view) were by no means overlooked in the main by Mozart, whom, in fact, they rather adroitly manage to claim as an ally, on the plea that he "unconsciously worked to the same end," though they (correctly) adduce instances in which he uses the lyric form where stage situation does not admit of it. But there is nothing essentially illogical or shocking to the critical sense in this form of lyric drama, if consistently carried out; the conditions of the representation are understood beforehand; there is really no more æsthetic *lapsus* in it than in people talking in blank verse or rhymed couplets

in the spoken drama. It may no doubt be objected that in such a form of composition the music is of primary and the poem of secondary importance, but it must be remembered that much of the effect and even the meaning of the music are dependent upon the existence of well-contrasted characters and telling "situations," which must be defined by the poet; not to say that the very objection supposed involves a begging of the question and an entire shifting of the ground of criticism. Waiving that, however, it must, I think, be admitted that there is a consistent form of *lyrical drama*, which has been the *point de départ* in the operatic works of Mozart, Beethoven, and Weber (not to mention lesser names), and which Wagner himself adhered to, to a considerable extent, in *Tannhäuser*. But there is also what we may distinguish as *musical drama*, in which the poem occupies altogether the first place, and in which the musical setting is employed purely as a means of adding force and colouring to dramatic expression, and the musical form is compelled to bend entirely to the form and progress of the drama. To this principle of the combination of music and drama Gluck's method tended, though, as already observed, he never fully realized it, the outlines of the old regular musical forms constantly showing themselves through the dramatic veil hung before them; and this principle Wagner definitively adopted in its entirety, as the only legitimate and satisfactory solution of the problem of the union of music with dramatic story and stage action.

The process of reasoning by which he arrived at this conclusion, and the theoretic basis upon which his form of musical drama is founded, are clearly set forth in Wagner's well known "Letter" to Villot, which summarizes a good deal of what was expressed more at length in his *Oper und Drama*, a treatise which he afterwards admitted to be rather of interest to himself than to the public. At the very commencement of his studies as a dramatic composer, the style of contemporary Italian opera, with its vocal displays

illogically dragged in, and its degradation of the orchestra into "a monstrous guitar for the accompaniment of *arias*," seems to have impressed him much as it would naturally impress all who look upon music as more than a mere plaything. French musical drama, as then displayed at the Paris Grand Opera, had more of attraction for a composer who seems to have been possessed naturally with a love of brilliant scenic effect and of characteristic instrumentation. The traditions of Gluck may be said to have so far left their impression on French opera, that, in spite of their radical divergence in spirit and aim, the modern operas of the French school display a richness of orchestral treatment, and a completeness of design in the relation of parts to the whole, to which the normal form of Italian opera is quite a stranger. That Wagner was carried away by the splendour and dazzle of this class of work, as displayed with every advantage of *mise en scène* in Paris, is evident from the fact that his first important work, *Rienzi*, written with a view to the Grand Opera, is completely in the cut and style of Meyerbeer, though not showing anything like the point, brilliancy, and individuality of treatment attained by that consummate master of scene-setting. But the fascination of the Grand Opera style soon palled upon the composer, who declared himself to have been inspired with a desire for a higher ideal of musical drama partly by his admiration for the genius of Madame Schroeder-Devrient, and for the effect she produced even in spite of the defective *genre* of the art which she had to illustrate, and which suggested the reflection, "What an incomparable work of art that might be, which should be perfectly worthy of such an artist, or of the dramatic talents of a number of such artists!" Perhaps, human nature being what it is, one may be excused for thinking that the non-acceptance of *Rienzi* at the Paris Opera, where the star of Meyerbeer was in the ascendant, may have had its share in the composer's revulsion of feeling against the "vulgar craftsmanlike performance" of modern

opera,[1] and his resolution, shortly after, to drop once for all any connection with "that frivolous institution."

With the aim of substituting for this art, which could claim no higher title than being a diversion, something which would raise the audience from the vulgar interests of daily life and "enable them to comprehend and adore the highest and most significantly beautiful that the human mind can adore," the composer was led, in the first instance, to abandon altogether the field of history or real life for that of popular tradition or *mythos*, on the ground that in the personages who act in such legends all which is merely conventional or accidental disappears, and they become rather concrete representations of abstract qualities in human nature, and therefore both of more universal interest and more suitable for illustration by music, which is not then required to deal with incongruous and prosaic circumstances, but only with broad types of human character or phases of human feeling. It has been mentioned just now that Gluck also drew his subjects almost entirely from Greek legend, though retaining a good deal more of real humanity than is to be found in the fantastic figures that occupy Wagner's stage. If, however, it be objected on the one hand that human semblance is almost entirely eliminated from these personages of Gothic fable, and that it is impossible to feel a dramatic interest in them, on the other hand it may be conceded that musical drama, being so far removed in its very nature from realism, finds its most congenial subjects in the region of romance rather than of real life. The more import-

[1] The fact that Wagner in the first instance failed where Meyerbeer was enjoying a brilliant success, seems the most rational explanation, also, of the almost childish spite and vituperation with which the very name of the composer of the *Huguenots* seems to inspire the faithful adherents of Wagner; so far, at least, as the word "rational" can be used in such a connection. The Hebrew cohort of operatic composers, of whom Meyerbeer was the Coryphæus, seem indeed to have rendered themselves equally obnoxious to both camps of the Gentiles, judging from the icy sarcasm of Rossini's reply to an inquiry when he was going to write another opera—"*Quand les Juifs ont fini leur Sabbat.*"

ant aim of Wagner, however, was the solution of the problem of the union on equal terms of music and poetry, in place of the previous almost invariable subordination of the poem to the musical form. Wagner seems to have been led to his attempt in this direction by considerations somewhat distinct from those of Gluck, and based on a more definitely constructed philosophical theory. His aim was not merely to retrench and repress incongruous development of the music at the expense of the poem and the situation, but to arrive at a union or blending of the two arts in which they should be completely interdependent, and in which the form of the musical setting should arise directly from that of the poem, and the progress of the two be synchronous. Such a union was not only, in his scheme, the means for the resuscitation of opera, but was the natural end to which the art of music had been tending. The tendency, as he asserted, of every separate branch of art is, after having arrived at the full extent of its own capabilities, to ally itself to a sister art. Thus, recognizing instrumental music in the form it was brought to by Beethoven as the complete and highest expression of the possibilities of that art, he was seized with the ambition of "turning the whole stream of Beethovenian music" in the direction of the drama, and achieving by the union of the two a higher and more intense expression than either separately could rise to. The initial difficulty in the way of such a combination of course is that, while poetry produces its effect by concentrated expression, music, as we usually understand the term, works by extension in time, by repetition and sequence,[1] and is under the dominion of a strict rhythm which will not bend to follow the multitudinous and varied alternations of speech and action in all the details of an elaborate drama. Either the poem, as heretofore, must give way to the music, or the musical form must give way to the poem. Wagner practically did not deny the dilemma; in the work which forms the most complete example of his method, he

[1] See Chapter I.

elects the latter alternative in fact, and deprives his music of the two qualities of *rhythm* and *tune* (which latter unsophisticated people term "melody") to make it interpenetrate with the words and the stage action; but he assures us that, so far from music being in any way weakened or degraded thereby, tune and rhythm are, in fact, not only non-essential qualities of music, but even indications that it is in a primitive and incomplete state.

The reasoning on which this sufficiently audacious theory has been maintained is worth attention, as it touches a broader question than mere opera reform, and we shall have to allude to it again. Looking back to the beginnings of music, Wagner considered that the quality of rhythm came to be engrafted on music, and regarded as an essential characteristic of the art, from the fact that the first use of music, by the Greeks, was as an accompaniment to the rhythmical movement of the dance. When the early Church adopted or adapted their primitive melodies, she dropped their vivacious rhythms as being only connected with the heathen art of dancing, and thereby deprived them of their sole means of expression; and "we can convince ourselves even to this day of the uncommon poverty of expression in ancient melody when deprived of its ornament of rhythm, by imagining it without the harmony which at present supports it." But "the Christian spirit, in order to raise the expressive power of melody, invented polyphonic harmony on the basis of the four-part chord, which by its characteristic changes served henceforth as a motive of expression to the melody—an end which had formerly been attained by means of its rhythm." When, with the decline of the Church, a vivacious inclination became predominant in the Italians also, in regard to the application of music, "they solved the difficulty by restoring to melody its original rhythmical properties, and thus applying it to song as it had formerly been applied to dance." This Wagner regards as nothing less than "a relapse into Paganism," the result of which has been that

modern melody is almost entirely indifferent to the verse, and its variation-like movement was in the end dictated solely by vocal *virtuosi,* while the resource of polyphonic harmony was entirely thrown aside, Italian operatic melody remaining "satisfied with a harmonic basis of such astounding poverty that it might exist without any accompaniment whatever." The treatment of the rhythmical form of music by the German composers I pass over for the present, as it touches more closely on another part of our subject; merely remarking that the final result of Wagner's theory is the adoption of a musical setting of his poems in which rhythm is discarded in the voice parts, and to a great extent evaded or concealed in the accompaniment, and which aims at a completely polyphonous character; *i.e.* it is music in which no one part or melody stands out from among the rest as predominant, but in which the effect is produced by the combination of the whole. Even the voice is no exception; for musically the voice is for the most part treated as an instrument among the other instruments, distinguished by its *timbre* and enunciation rather than by the character of the passages assigned to it; and æsthetically the voice, the actor, may be regarded as supplying the text for the musical commentary of the orchestra. As for the demand for "melody," "the reiterated cry of superficial musical amateurs" for this desired element only proves that they derive their notion of melody from works "in which, side by side with melody, there is a sustained tunelessness serving as background." As, according to Wagner, music *is* melody, and no music is possible without melody, this complaint must merely mean that he does not give the "superficial" critics the particular kind of melody they wish for. They wish for the first narrow form of melody as it appeared in the dance-tune. He offers them a combination of melodies, which are to be as the multitudinous voices, for example, of the forest on a summer night; where, however many sounds strike upon the ear, they all appear as the one great forest

melody—a melody which will haunt the listener, but which cannot be hummed or repeated: "to hear it again he must return to the woods on a summer night. Would it not be folly if he were to catch a sweet wood-bird, so as to train it at home to whistle a fragment of that great forest melody?" We are not, therefore, to condemn the composer for not giving us what he never aimed at or intended. We are to accept or to judge his work as what it is intended for—a poem recited by the actors in musical tones and accompanied by an orchestra whose combined sounds form a perpetual illustrative tone-picture of the actions and passions of the drama, towards which the orchestra occupies the same position as the chorus in the Greek drama; a comparison used by the composer perhaps rather to render his aim clearer than as implying a precise parallel between the two, which it may be readily seen that there is not.

It is not to be supposed, however, that this complete and rounded theory of musical drama was arrived at immediately on the composer's flight from the blandishments of popular opera. On the contrary, Wagner was particularly desirous to impress on his critics that his theories have arisen to a great extent from the direction in which he was impelled in the course of composition; and that he is not open to the charge constantly made against him of deliberately putting music together upon *a priori* principles. We are, of course, bound to give due weight to such a statement, however irreconcilable with some apparent facts. The chain of sequence of the composer's works exhibits, however, a gradual progress in one direction. The *Fliegende Holländer*, the successor of *Rienzi*, is by its comparatively small dimensions and the romantic and legendary character of its subject, direct evidence of the reaction from the *genre* of the Paris Opera; but the composer was still under the influence of the traditional forms of operatic music, "which had hitherto made a poem that did not admit of numerous verbal repetitions nearly impossible." In *Tannhäuser*, again,

a great deal of the extended musical form and verbal repetition was retained, to which the lyrical nature of many of the situations naturally tended; though we see the beginning of the composer's recoil from rhythmical form in his refusal even to allow the minstrels in the competition a true lyric song (a concession which would have been quite consistent with, and even demanded by, the situation), while the more connected lyrical form assigned to Tannhäuser in his praise of Venus seems an exemplification of the "pagan" theory of rhythm. Still, in its main features and design, *Tannhäuser* may be called a work of the Weber school, or at least with strong reflections of Weber. In *Lohengrin* the departure from precedent is carried further; with the exception of the Wedding Chorus, which of course is a metrical hymn, there is not a single connected melodic piece with the to-and-fro sway and rhythm which we call "tune"; though there are snatches of melody in the old style, such as the outburst of Elsa at the triumph of her deliverer, which presents a melodic "subject" such as a composer of the traditional school would have worked up into a grand *prima donna* air. The treatment of the orchestra approaches much nearer than in *Tannhäuser* to that broad and vague tone-picturing to which the composer was tending; and the instrumental preludes to the acts lose all reminiscence of the old *Overture* form. The chorus on the stage, however, still retains its old dimensions and importance, and indulges in set pieces longer and more elaborated in form, indeed, than operatic choruses have generally been. After *Lohengrin*, it appears that the composer's genius "fell among thorns," and that he was occupied long and wearily with considerations, antipathetical, as he says, to the very nature of the artist temperament, as to the establishment of a correct theoretic basis for the further prosecution of the art in the channel he had adopted. From the depression resulting from these wanderings in the tortuous labyrinth of theory, he was raised again to his natural temperament, "as if recovered

from a long malady," by the ambition to embody his ideas in a great work on a scale which would in itself put it out of the category of ordinary opera, and the performance of which was only to be attempted under extraordinary circumstances, when all the means required for an undertaking on such a scale could be insured. This was the Tetralogy, under the title of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, which was given first at Bayreuth in the autumn of 1876, and in which Wagner evidently had in his mind the revival in a modern form of the great dramatic festivals of Greece, which had always hovered before him as an ideal, in times past, of a national artistic entertainment. The composition of such a work of course spread over some years; and it was whilst still engaged on it that he was induced, partly by hearing of the growing acceptance of his earlier works on the part of the public, to pause from his task for the composition of a smaller opera which would give him the chance of at once hearing something of his own written in accordance with his latest feelings and views on the art. The work written in accordance with this impulse is *Tristan und Isolde*, which is in fact later in order of composition than most of the Tetralogy, and which represents more completely than any other other of his works the artistic result of the theory of opera which he evolved and to which he may be said to have pledged himself. In this work the subordination of the music to the drama, or, as its composer would probably have preferred to say, the interpenetration of the two, is complete. Not a vestige of lyrical form is left (saving a rough song by Kurwenal and the Knights in praise of Tristan's exploits); the operatic chorus has utterly disappeared, and "the entire extent of the music is, as it were, presented in the tissue of words and verses—that is to say, that the musical melody is already contained in the poem." The step from *Tannhäuser* to *Tristan* is accordingly, as the composer himself observed, much longer than that from *Rienzi* to *Tannhäuser*. We may readily concede that a much more intimate amal-

gamation between the poem and the music is attained by this method of procedure, and find no difficulty in believing that this prefiguration of the musical form in the poem may have proved rather a help and stimulus than a hindrance in composing the latter. There remains the question, "whether by this procedure the musical form of melody is not prejudiced by being deprived of its freedom of movement as well as development?" That is indeed the question upon which Wagnerian opera must ultimately stand or fall, and in regard to which it becomes the chief business of the critic to furnish an answer.

Of Wagner's theoretic basis for the position he assumed I should say at once that it appears to me to be equally contradicted by nature and by art-history. One can hardly be expected to waste space in collecting formal evidence that the love of rhythmical accent is something inherent in human nature, and not dependent on accidents of time, place, and habit. I have in a previous chapter alluded to the fact, certainly not insignificant, that even the very physical basis of musical tone is rhythm, since the distinction between what we recognize as musical sounds and those which are not so consists in the isochronous character of the vibrations in the former. The statement of the case on historical grounds, methodical as it appears in Wagner's way of putting it, is based upon a complete *petitio principii*. Granting that we had data sufficient to enable us to say positively that Greek music consisted in rhythmical tunes used only as an accompaniment to the dance, why is the dance to be the cause and the music the effect? Surely it were at least as reasonable to regard both as springing from the same innate tendency to rhythmical expression; or even to go further and regard the dance as arising out of the music, and impossible without it. The tune can be invented and played without the dance; the latter cannot well be danced without the tune. Admitting, however, the dance-form of prehistoric music to be established, Wagner points to the noble school of un-

rhythmical polyphonous music of which Palestrina was the great name, and asks who, after hearing his *Stabat Mater*, and contrasting it with the mere tune-writing of the modern Italian opera, "could suppose the latter to be the legitimate daughter of that wondrous mother?" Fully symphathizing with the main tendency of the feeling implied by the question, I reply that even supposing the historical connection between the two schools cannot be traced (as I think it can), the deduction as to the inherent supremacy of music unfettered by rhythm is no fair one from the premisses. In the first place, it must be remembered that the early Italian church school, however grand and elevated in style, is very restricted in its range, and is in fact only the somewhat monotonous though solemn and impressive rendering of a special phase of religious feeling; while it would be most unfair to deny to the modern Italian school the creation of melodies, some of which have stirred all hearts, and whose charm, such as it is, seems to be imperishable. But the light *genre* of the modern Italian school generally—the "poverty of harmonic basis" which Wagner satirizes—is no intrinsic characteristic of rhythmical music. The German school also "reverted" (if we are so to speak) to the rhythmical or "dance-tune" form of melody, and treated it polyphonally in a grand series of works the greatness of which Wagner does not venture to deny; and the fair comparison would be between this and the early Italian school—between polyphonous melody *plus* rhythm and polyphonous melody *minus* rhythm. I will not insult the critical faculty of the reader by asking him whether or not he considers the choral works of Handel and Bach, or the school of instrumental music which culminated in Beethoven, an extension of the boundaries of the art as practised by Palestrina and his compeers. The educated world, with the exception of a few ecclesiological enthusiasts, has fully made up its mind on that point. A somewhat similar logical fallacy is apparent in Wagner's assertion, repeated still more authoritatively by his literary satellites,

that, so far from melody being cramped or interfered with by his system, it is greatly extended, and that his operas are, in fact, one succession and blending of melody from beginning to end. It is obvious that this is a mere arbitrary playing with language. We all know what we mean by "melody"; and if its essence be more easily felt than defined, we at least know that it is dependent on measured accent in time as well as on measured intervals in pitch, for that symmetrical proportion which gives it an individual and recognizable form.[1] Wagner might plead that his music presents opportunity for higher expression than can be attained through melodic form, but it was absurd to pretend that he was offering the world the quality which it understands by the term "melody." It is open to a dramatic poet to maintain, if he please, that prose is a more suitable or even a nobler medium of expression for his art than verse, but he would be justly derided if he were to urge that it was in fact the highest and most complete development of verse.

Passing by for the moment the question whether the principle of musical composition advocated by Wagner is absolutely a higher development of the art, is it so relatively to the objects and theory of the musical drama? Is it the best and most consistent theory of the union of music and poetry? Admitting at once that such a form of art must in the end be judged by its results—by its power over the listener's feelings (which is the sole defence that can be set up for the form of most works now occupying the lyric stage)—we can nevertheless hardly fail to see that the consistency of Wagner's method is sorely menaced when subjected to an impartial examination. We noticed above the differentiation between the methods of poetry and music respectively; the power of concentration in the former, the almost absolute need of extension and repetition in the latter. This has been well brought out by Matthew Arnold in his thoughtful little essay in verse, rather than poem, *An Epilogue on*

[1] See pages 8–10.

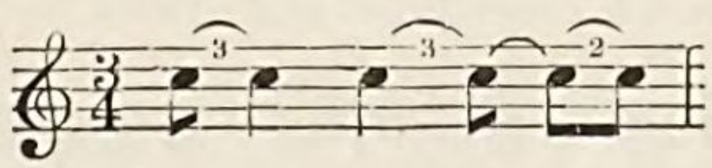
Lessing's Laocoon, where he discriminates the province of music, in relation to words, by instancing the depth and extension which the musician imparts to the feeling expressed in such a concentrated phrase as *Miserere Domine*—

> "Beethoven takes those two
> Poor bounded words, and makes them new;
> . . . . .
> Page after page of music turn
> And still they glow and still they burn,
> Eternal, passion-fraught, and free,
> '*Miserere Domine.*'"

So Handel, when he would tell us how "the children of Israel sighed, by reason of the burdens," does so by the repetition, the persistence with which the grief and sighing are drawn out until the impression has sunk into our hearts. So, to glance at instrumental music, when Beethoven invented that deeply pathetic *Allegretto* in his Seventh Symphony, it is not by the mere enunciation of the theme that he touches us; it is not till the leading proposition, so to speak, has been drawn out, repeated, amplified, contrasted, heard now in this form, now in that, till its last broken accents die on our ears, that we realize the feeling which he meant to awaken in our souls. But the compositions referred to are not dramatic in their form. True: but do not such examples, and innumerable others, practically testify to the truth of the theory as stated by Arnold, and does it not follow that in a system which implies the detailed interpenetration of the music and the poem, precisely the reverse of the old error has been committed—that the music has been sacrificed to the poem? And yet further inconsistencies seem to arise as we look more closely at the conditions of the combination. Whatever his contempt for rhythm, the composer is obliged to employ the division into "bars" which originated with rhythm—the very possibility of getting his music executed depends upon it; and so we find him, not only in his latest work, but even in many parts of *Lohengrin*,

in a continual strife between the rhythmical division implied by the barring, and the effort to conceal and escape from it by devices of syncopation and other means of breaking up and nullifying the recurring bar accent.[1] This is a matter of form comparatively; a still stranger inconsistency is that rhythm should be retained in the most marked and recurrent form in the versification, and yet that the consistency of the music with the poem is to be obtained by obliterating the rhythm of the latter! There seems to be an absolute perversity of reasoning implied in such a method. Then, again, though the poem and the dramatic action are to be the basis of the whole, without which the music can have no *locus standi* whatever, yet the actors, who are to sing the words, are in the musical construction completely secondary, and in absolute bondage to the orchestra, in the fetters of whose intricate movement they are entangled. This is a singular result of a theory which professes to regard "the human word" as the primal cause and motive of music. Surely the theory of what we have called *lyrical* drama (as distinct from *musical* drama), in which music in its extended forms of construction is used to amplify and intensify the emotional expression at the great crises of the poem, is as consistent as this. Wagner himself admitted the power and beauty attained by some of the great composers in this *genre* of opera; admitted also that in their finest scenes they have entirely surmounted what is (no doubt) the weak point in it—"the juxtaposition of absolute recitative and absolute aria, so detrimental to a perfect style;" and that the recitative has

[1] As an example of Wagner's struggles to escape from bar-rhythm may be noted the elaborate device of syncopation in the accompaniment to the scene "O sink' hernieder," in *Tristan:*



This is certainly a most ingenious way of depriving the listener's ear of all perception of the measured time which is nevertheless an inevitable condition of the very execution of the music. Whether the puzzle is worth the trouble may be a question.

received already with them, in such cases, "a melodic and rhythmic significance, and unites itself insensibly with the broader structure of melody proper." Yet, in his pursuit of that *ignis fatuus*, a perfectly logical theory, the modern composer, instead of working up to its further capabilities a system which he admits to have produced such great effects, cuts the knot by discarding altogether what he here truly defines as "the broader structure of *melody proper*," and adopting the imperfect recitative form as the sole means of expression for the deeper emotions as well as for the lesser incidents of his drama! A greater unity of form, a more close connection between words and music, may be thus obtained; but it is at the cost of forbidding to music all her old freedom of flight, of clipping her wings and putting her in a strait-jacket.

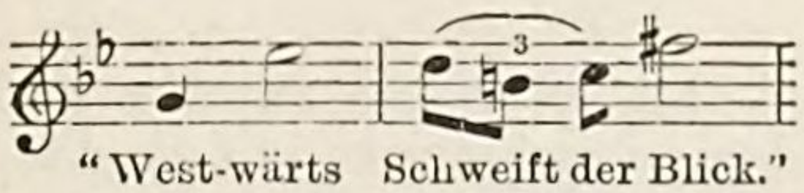
Such a conviction, however, by no means implies a denial of the real power to be found in such a work as *Tristan* (which represents the Wagner method in its purest form), whether existent in accordance with or in spite of the method employed; or of the real interest attaching to such an attempt at a new basis for the combination of music and drama. Let us look a little more closely at the results of his method as here displayed. An important feature in the relation of the music to the drama, not yet touched upon, we may give in the words of the late Mr. Hüffer, who constituted himself the prophet of Wagner in England:—

> "For every important idea or passionate impulse of his characters, Wagner introduces a certain striking harmonious or melodious combination, as the musical complement of their dramatic force. Whenever in the course of the drama this impulse comes into action, we hear at once its corresponding motive, either sung by the voice or played by the orchestra, and in manifold variations, according to circumstances."

This idea of labelling a character with a special phrase is of course not new: it has been suggested by Mozart and carried further by Weber and others; but Wagner first applied it as a ruling principle pervading a whole work. However such

a system may aid in giving unity and completeness to the musical expression of the drama, it is at once open to question whether this arbitrary selection of phrases to represent certain ideas is not a mechanical and prosaic, rather than an imaginative and emotional use of music. The main subject of the legend of *Tristan* probably is, certainly ought to be, best known to modern English readers by Matthew Arnold's beautiful version of it in his early poem *Tristram and Iseult;* a work of far higher poetic tone and tendency than the Laureate's *bizarre* treatment of the legend. After a prelude in which the leading motive of the work is prominent, Wagner's drama opens, like Arnold's poem, on board the ship in which Tristan is conveying King Mark's bride to Cornwall, the scene opening (musically) with an unaccompanied song of a young sailor, who starts off with a phrase containing such intervals as no sailor in this world ever sung except in a Wagner opera.[1] The serious action of the drama is set in motion by an imperious message from Queen Isolde to Tristan, which excites the anger of his squire Kurwenal, whose braggart song in contempt of her former lover and in praise of his conqueror Tristan, taken up by Tristan's followers, is the only approach to a "tune" in the work; and the giving of the enchanted cup arises in the end out of no "courtesy," but is administered and partaken by Isolde, apparently, under the impression that it is a "Todestrank," in a fit of injured pride at her own treatment by Tristan and of desperation as to her future lot. Their long word-fencing is interrupted at intervals by the shouts of the crew raising or lowering the sails, a sort of "yo-heave-ho!" put into a musical form little different from what one might actually hear, and which illustrates how completely the old

[1]



"West-wärts Schweift der Blick."

Imagine any sailor pouring out his soul in song in such an artificial and unmelodious phrase as that.

tradition of the opera-chorus has been thrown over. At last the fatal draught is drunk; during a pause filled only by a troubled murmur from the *tremolo* of the basses in the orchestra, with broken snatches of the first motive of the overture, the two gaze on each other, and almost at the moment when they realize their new madness and fall into each other's arms, the land is reached, the cheers that greet King Mark are heard, and the curtain falls eventually upon the shouts of "Cornwall, hail!" the tumultuous jubilation of the full orchestra, the clangour of trumpets on the stage, and the vain endeavours of their astonished attendants to rouse the dazed and enchanted lovers to the comprehension of their position. The second act opens on the warm bright summer night in the palace gardens, before the chambers of Isolde, who issues thence with her attendant Brangäne to await her lover. The suspense is long drawn out; at last, after an interlude of some length, the entry of Tristan is led up to with that tumultuous rush and *crescendo* of the band which Wagner makes so effective in securing a climax, and the two, after hurried and broken ejaculations in which the line separating singing from ordinary speech is as nearly crossed as possible, run through the whole gamut of passion in a scene compared with which even what has been termed "the everlasting duet" in *Lohengrin* must hide its diminished head. At length the storm of passion subsides, and after a passage of intense pathos at the words "O sink' hernieder, Nacht der Liebe," the anticlimax is reached, and "Tristan und Isolde, versinken wie in gänzliche Entrücktheit, in der sie, Haupt an Haupt, auf die Blumenbank zurückgelehnt, verweilen;"[1] while

[1] So runs the stage-direction. The peculiar stolidity which the German mind seems able to bring to bear on the treatment of such a subject is rather calculated to excite a smile than any more serious comment. Still, one may be inclined to think that no English audience would ever witness the above scene, or the wedding-chamber scene in *Lohengrin*, without an uneasy half-suspicion that the veil had been somewhat too rashly withdrawn from the sanctities of passion and of affection respectively.

over them is heard from the battlements the song of Brangäne—

"Einsam wachend in der Nacht,
Wem der Traum der Liebe lacht"—

the singer invisible, her voice sustained by a soft *arpeggio* accompaniment. The introduction of this interlude of Brangäne, warning the dreamers that the night is waning, is a masterly stroke of dramatic effect; unfortunately the really poetic suggestiveness of the situation is impaired or lost by the total lack of melodic beauty in the music allotted to Brangäne. But the lovers are roused at last only to hate the day, to desire death, to dream of some state in which even their own identity is merged and lost in an eternal sea of passion—

"Wie es fassen? wie sie lassen,
Diese Wonne, fern der Sonne,
Fern der Tage Trennungs-klage?
Ohne Wähnen sanftes Sehnen,
Ohne Bangen süss Verlangen;
Ohne Wehen hehr Vergehen,
Ohne Schmachten hold Um-nachten;
Ohne Meiden,
Ohne Scheiden,
Traut allein,
Ewig Heim,
In un-gemess'nen Räumen,
In über-sel'ges Träumen.
Du Isolde—Tristan *du*—
Tristan ich, nicht mehr Isolde—
Ich Isolde, nicht mehr Tristan!
Ohne Nennen, ohne Trennen,
Neu Erkennen, neu Entbrennen:
Endlos, ewig ein-bewusst;
Ewig heiss erglühter Brust,
Endlos höchste Liebes-Lust!"

and here, just as the musical expression has risen to a delirious whirl in which all form and restraint seem to be lost, enter King Mark and Melot (the traditional "betrayer"

of all drama) and the castle folk in hunting array, and the act ends eventually with Tristan sinking down wounded in an affray with Melot. In the third act we are at Tristan's castle in Brittany, where he slumbers wearily while the faithful Kurwenal and a countryman look anxiously for the ship that is to bring Isolde. The mental and physical struggle of the hero between hope and remembrance, weakness and longing, are portrayed in a scene too long for description here, till the ship arrives with the dramatic effect which Wagner knows how to impart to such an incident, and Isolde rushes breathless in, only to see her knight expire in her arms. Hard upon the catastrophe comes the cry of "ein zweites Schiff!" on which Mark and Melot are discerned. The latter meets with the usual fate of the betrayer (in drama) at the hands of Kurwenal; and after King Mark has expressed his sorrow at the general untoward course of events,[1] the work concludes, not with the traditional chorus-singing, but with the swan-song of Isolde, the final strife between love and death; and as she imagines her re-union, she knows not how, with the soul of him who is all to her—

> "In des Wonnemeeres wogendem Schwall,
> In der Duft-Wellen tönendem Schall,
> In des Welt-Athems wehendem All
> Ertrinken, versinken—
> Unbewusst,
> Höchste Lust!"

her accents grow weaker, and with the last broken wail she sinks on the body of Tristan, while the orchestral movement dies away to a faint *pianissimo*, and the curtain slowly falls on "Grosse Rührung und Entrücktheit unter den Umstehenden."

[1] A well-known composer told me an amusing anecdote as to the manner in which a newspaper correspondent condensed an account of the plot of the opera, on its first performance, into a brief telegram, which ran as follows:—

Act I.—Tristan and Isolde meet; King Mark looks the other way.

Act II.—Tristan and Isolde meet; King Mark says, "Why?"

Act III.—Tristan and Isolde meet: King Mark says, "Bless you, my children."

As Wagner claimed to be a poet as well as a musician, and the composition of his drama is an essential part of his work, the above passages have been quoted, as representative of his poetic claims, from the original text. The *libretto* of an opera has seldom much claim to literary merit; but of all the doggerel ever written "to be said or sung" on the stage, Wagner's verses appear to be among the worst. Childish jingle and alliteration take the place of poetic thought and imagery; and whatever he may have done with the art of Mozart and Beethoven, he has certainly prostituted the language of Schiller and Goethe. But it would be cruel to judge such trash by any known literary standard.

Yet the mere perusal of the score shows a certain power and intensity in the general treatment of the legend, so wild and exciting in itself, so full in one sense of human interest. One cannot but remark in particular the genius for dramatic effect displayed in the manner in which Wagner opens each act; how he gives the local colour and feeling of the surroundings: on the ship—in the palace gardens on the summer night—in the castle, where the pipe of the Breton herdsman heard outside gives the first indication that we are on new ground; and the art with which he excites the expectation of the spectator by one device after another, while withholding the climax of the scene. But when we regard the work from a purely musical point of view, one can see little hope of a future for it as a whole. Points there are which at once assert themselves, no doubt: such as the prelude and scenic music of the second act; the ecstatic rush of the violins in a phrase which becomes a prominent feature of the great scene between the lovers, entering first at the words, "O Wonne der Seele"; the short "Ha!" upon a high note, with which Isolde recognizes that her lover is dead; and her final dirge, in which the voice floats over the billows of sound from the orchestra. But, without repeating what has been already said as to the place of rhythm in music, the vocal portions seem for the

most part to be written with an absolute and determined ignoring of the fact that certain intervals are more natural to the voice and the ear than others. Even the sailor and the herdsman cannot be allowed to sing and pipe naturally; they sing and pipe in Wagnerian intervals.[1] Wagner speaks in one place, and speaks eloquently, of the wonderful power of music "which, by means of the firm precision of melodic expression, lifts even the least gifted singer so high above the level of his personal performances." But even the *most* gifted singer will look in vain for this "precision of melody," except in a few isolated sentences. The voice is dragged through such tortuous and unnatural paths that the really free expression of feeling on the part of the singer seems often almost incompatible with the strain on the ear, and the attention necessary to keep in correct relation with the labyrinth of orchestral accompaniments, in regard to which the singer is, as before observed, only an instrument among the other instruments Without forgetting the stricture which Gluck passed upon those who judged of his operas apart from their effect on the stage, I cannot but think that the uncertainty and confusion of tonal relation in the vocal melodies, as well as in the harmonic construction of the orchestral part, implies not merely an indifference to scientific method (which is debatable ground), but an ignoring of the physical basis of music, which rests on demonstrable facts, and by which its æsthetic form must necessarily, within certain limits, be determined. That Wagner, in his attempt to give to musical drama the unrestrained freedom of spoken drama, has overstepped these limits, must, I should think, be the ultimate conclusion based on such a work as *Tristan*. Nor can I believe that the

[1] *Ex. gr.* from the herdsman's pipings:—



Compare this tuneless and tortured form of *jodel* with the *Ranz des Vaches* phrase in the overture to *Guillaume Tell*.

brilliant and powerful points in the work can ever, with any but a very partial audience, adequately atone for the tedium inseparable from a method which allows so little relief and contrast of manner and effect, and which, discarding the resources of amplification and extension of musical form, and emphasizing every detail of the words, keeps the musical expression, so to speak, at a white heat throughout, and never allows the listener a moment's repose.

Coming now to the gigantic combination of four operas on the largest scale, which forms the tetralogy composed under the general title of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, we find that the style of the first two dramas at least of the tetralogy is much less "advanced" in regard to musical form than that of *Tristan*. We find for the most part much clearer outline, a distinct and even persistently-marked rhythm in much of the music, especially that for the minor beings (*characters* they can hardly be called) among the *dramatis personæ*. Indeed, one could imagine the *Rheingold*, which forms the prelude to the whole, becoming in England a very popular opera of the faërie and stage-machinery school. The opening scene, with the three Rhine-maidens swimming about and chasing each other laughingly from rock to rock. while the orchestra keeps up its incessant flowing and undulating accompaniment, is as effective a thing of the kind as could be wished for. As we turn the pages of the score, we gain at least (if we had it not before) an idea of Wagner's remarkable power and originality as a picturesque orchestral colourist. When we descend into Nibelheim, where Alberic, the Nibelung dwarf, and possessor of the Ring *pro tem.*, is lording it over the wretched Mimes and making them work for him, we are half startled at the reality of effect achieved by the eighteen anvils, great and small, behind the scenes, which in their combination of heavy thud and rapid clatter, working in time to the characteristic music of the band in front, remind us of the terrible and systematized battering which assailed the ears of Sir Scudamour in the "House of

Care";[1] and, in a sufficiently opposite way, the last scene in the *Rheingold*, where the gods with renewed youth cross the rainbow bridge to their abodes, amid the continuous shimmering accompaniment of the violins in a rapid *tremolo* (in eight parts), and the glancing arpeggios of the harps, is a climax almost irresistible as a bit of brilliant effect. Other points may be noticed: the dreamy effect of the low note of the violoncello and the hushed taps of the drum, as Siegmund sinks to slumber by the dying fire in the first scene of *Die Walküre*, and the change when a breeze blows the door open and the bright moonlight shines in, and the sounds of the orchestra awake in sympathy with it; the gloom which overspreads the score, so to speak, when Brünnhilde comes as the messenger of death to Siegmund; the bright and sparkling passages for strings and wind alternately, almost like laughter in a musical form, which accompany the sports of the Walküre, and the rich and brilliant effect of the instrumentation in the last scene of the same opera, where the magic fire that burns around Brünnhilde's resting-place seems to glow and flicker in the sounds of the music. This last is perhaps one of the best instances of the power of Wagner's method in using music to intensify stage effect and situation. The mere lighting of the stage fire, though the spectator is told of its magical and important influence over the heroine, would produce little effect; but the accompanying music imparts quite a prophetic significance to the incident.

On the other hand, one cannot but be struck at the sometimes almost absurd disproportion between the orchestral effect and the poem and action. The rush of the band to emphasize with an overpowering *fortissimo* some word or gesture which seems totally unworthy of such tremendous emphasis, almost provokes a smile at times at the disproportion between cause and effect. Big scores do not necessarily make great music, either. Meyerbeer has not thrown Gluck into the

[1] *Faërie Queen*, Book iv. canto 5, stanzas 35–37.

shade, nor has Spontini superseded Mozart. Nor, again, can one ignore the fact that we meet in Wagner's scores with a constant recurrence of certain resources of effect, repeated to an extent which amounts to mannerism. One of these, the incessant reiteration, namely, of a particular orchestral phrase or figure, till it mechanically takes the ear by storm, seems to me to be little more than a trick played on the physical susceptibilities of the audience, and, as Wagner sometimes uses it, a very cheap trick.[1] But a still more serious drawback to our allegiance is the puerility, to English ideas, of much of Wagner's dramas, which illustrate only too well that peculiar childish element in the German mind, the pre sence of which to a certain extent even in Goethe formed perhaps the one national weakness of that otherwise most cosmopolitan genius. When *Lohengrin* was first produced in London, probably a good many besides the writer may have wondered whether it was possible in any country but Germany that such a mere fairy extravaganza should be made the subject of such solemn and elephantine moralizing as has been expended upon what is supposed to be the *morale* of this opera. The case is certainly not bettered when we come to the *Ring des Nibelungen;* and as we light on the passage where Fricka (the Juno of the *mythus*) shakes her sleeping spouse at daybreak, and says, "Wake up, man, and bestir yourself!" or where Alberic changes himself first into a serpent, and then into a frog, and his windings in the one case and jumpings in the other are grotesquely illustrated by the band; when we see the pages on pages of elaborate scoring in accompaniment to the movements of creatures

[1] I was witness to an amusing exemplification of this on the occasion of my first acquaintance with the *Tannhäuser* Overture, at a very crowded concert, when the less conventional section of the audience found the reiterated scale passages for the violins at the climax so exciting that their feelings could not be restrained till the end of the overture, the last part of which was played amidst a *crescendo* of hand-clapping! Wagner's partisans are welcome to this instance of the popular effect of his music; they will, perhaps, also reflect whether this kind of homage has been usually bestowed on what is highest and most intellectual in the art.

whose efforts at speech extend little beyond "Heia!" "Wallaha!" or "Ho-jo-to-ho!"; when we hear of the special contrivances by which the stage is to be filled with different coloured mists at pleasure, or read the stage-direction in the scene of the fight between the hero and Fafner in the form of a dragon, in *Siegfried*—"The machine, which represents the dragon, is during the fight brought somewhat nearer the foreground, to a point where a new trap-door opens under it, through which the player of the part of Fafner sings through a speaking-trumpet"—we may perhaps be pardoned if we find the sentence about "the highest and most significantly beautiful that the human mind can adore" recurring rather oddly to us, or if we even feel some doubts about the raising of music to its highest intellectual province by associating it with the ordinary "business" of a Christmas pantomime.

For it was not only as a new exponent of musical drama that Wagner came before us. His theory aims at much more than placing this one form of musical production on a new basis. His position amounts to nothing less than this: that purely instrumental music is practically dead; that it has run its course and said all that it has to say; has been weighed in the balance and found wanting; and that the highest mission and true end and object of music is only realized when it is the exponent of poetry, and that this is the climax towards which music has been consistently progressing; and Beethoven, the great poet of instrumental music, is claimed as the inaugurator of this new era. On what principle this claim is made may be indicated by a quotation or two (necessarily brief) from Mr. Hüffer's treatise before referred to. In the preface to *The Music of the Future* we find the remark that, though the first three movements of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony may be called the triumph of absolute music, yet—

> "In this very splendour of artistic perfection we indistinctly, but no less certainly, feel the want of something that remains unexpressed;

and by acknowledging this want as founded in the nature of music itself, and introducing into the last movement of his D minor Symphony the human word as a firm basis for his lofty aspirations, Beethoven has at the same time ushered in a new period of his art."

And in the same work we find the following (page 45), which I extract from a long dissertation on the futility of absolute music :—

"He (Beethoven) was the first to condense the vague feelings which were all that music had hitherto expressed into more distinctly intelligible ideas. He even brings the song of birds, the thunder, and the murmuring brook before the ear, not as a portrait of nature, but as at once a suggestion and embodiment of the feelings which would be called up by them ; *Mehr Ausdruck der Empfindung als Malerei*, as he wrote at the head of his Pastoral Symphony. . . . . Indeed, there are passages in Beethoven's later instrumental works, such as long distinct *recitativi*, which can only be explained by the presence of some occult idea struggling for self-conciousness, or, if it may be, expression. This idea being previous to all musical conception, the forms of absolute music had to submit to its harmonious expansion, and in this way the spell of their unlimited sway was broken for ever. It therefore was Beethoven who restored the true relations of the two arts, which henceforth became inseparable."

The ingenuity with which a theory that upsets all the recognized standing-ground of the art, and depreciates indefinitely the value of nearly all Beethoven's principal contributions to it, is thus made to stand, like a pyramid upon its apex, upon one movement of one of his symphonies, with a few props from random passages in his works, is noteworthy enough. But what does all this really amount to ? So far from the existence of the choral *finale* to the Ninth Symphony proving that Beethoven had abandoned the idea of pure instrumental music, it might be said with more probability that the very fact of his having once used this resource afforded in itself a presumption that he would not have recurred to it. Had he died just after writing the Pastoral Symphony, it might equally have been urged that he had adopted what is now called "programme music" as the true end of the art ; but his two next symphonies (the first of them

a much greater and more recondite work than the *Pastorale*) are without note, hint, or comment of any kind. About the middle of his career he wrote a pianoforte fantasia with chorus, but, so far from subsequently confining himself to this form, he never repeated it, and his most elaborate works for pianoforte solo were written long after. The reference to the recitative passages in his instrumental works is the most absurd of all. They are literally infinitesimal in extent in proportion to the mass of his compositions; they occur in his earlier as well as in his latest works (*e.g.* the D minor Sonata), and they are not new there. The slow movement of one of Haydn's finest quartetts consists entirely of a recitative in vocal and dramatic style for the first violin; and in a certain set of variations on Grétry's air, "Une fièvre brulante"—long attributed to Mozart, and certainly of his day—there may be found a whole page of recitative almost as dramatic in style as that in Beethoven's Op. 110 Sonata. But we are asked to regard these accidents as essentials, because it suits the theory of Wagner's disciples; while the fact is ignored that Beethoven's very last great pianoforte sonata concludes with a set of variations as brilliantly and symmetrically elaborated, as purely music for the sake of music, as anything that Mozart (or even Bach) ever wrote. Nor, as has already been observed, can the view which regards the *finale* of the Choral Symphony as the roof and crown of the composer's works be accepted by a sound and calm criticism. If a work of art is to be judged, as surely it ultimately must be, by its finish in form as well as by its greatness of idea, this *finale* must be regarded rather as a colossal sketch than a finished picture—vast and extended in its perspectives, but wavering in outline, uncertain in composition, unequal in finish, in comparison with many previous works of its author. It is a popular fallacy to suppose that Beethoven was a kind of vast irregular genius (as the French critics used to imagine Shakespeare), overflowing with *Geist*, but indifferent to artistic form and finish. On the contrary, he was, in the majority of his

works, one of the most consummate artists in feeling and practice that ever lived, and the minute and detailed finish of all his finest works is as remarkable as their pathetic power. But these qualities are ignored, and a wholesale misrepresentation of the scope of his genius put forth, because the adherents of Wagner are determined to persuade the world that Wagner is a Beethoven, in pursuance of which end they use all their ingenuity to prove that Beethoven was no more than a Wagner.

We may look with some contempt on the manner in which Beethoven is manipulated by a clique of critics who think they can pay no greater homage to so transcendent a genius than by endeavouring to make him the hobby-horse of their theories. But what are we to say of the theory, taken in the abstract, which denies to Music any voice of her own, which represents her only as the medium for assisting the expression of words, as dependent entirely on a defined intention as a basis? It is difficult to know how to reach the minds of people who are capable of such an assertion. The very power and pride, the very *raison d'être* of music, is that it expresses that which words are powerless to express, which can be expressed in no other way. Browning has put this well in that nevertheless somewhat over-estimated poem, *Abt Vogler*. If he had painted his idea as a picture, or written it in verse, says the musician, still "effect proceeds from cause":—

> "Ye know why the forms are fair, ye hear how the tale is told;
>
> . . . . . .
>
> But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will that can,
> Existent behind all laws, that made them, and lo, they are!
> And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to man,
> That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound, but a star.
> Consider it well; each tone of our scale in itself is nought;
> It is everywhere in the world—loud, soft, and all is said:
> Give it to me to use! I mix it with two in my thought,
> And there! ye have seen and heard; consider, and bow the head!
>
> . . . . . .

Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear,
Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal and woe :
But God has a few of us whom he whispers in the ear ;
The rest may reason and welcome : 'tis we musicians know."

No doubt the musician does write from a previous impulse ; no doubt, too, that modern music is more purely emotional than that of the older writers. But the change is one of feeling, not of principle. The transition from the earlier contrapuntal style of music to that of Beethoven is nearly analogous to that which has taken place in painting, from the figure-drawing of the great Italian painters to the landscape art of which Turner unlocked the treasury, and the idyllic subjects to which our best painters are now so much devoting themselves. As Michael Angelo took a delight in the drawing and foreshortening of a figure for its own sake, and thereby expressed the power that was in him, so the older composers took a delight in the working out of a theme for its own sake, and thereby expressed the power that was in them, and gave us that which speaks no definite language certainly, but which appeals to what is beyond the reach of language—to the metaphysical sense of a divine order and harmony, of which music is the most subtle and at the same time the most direct and comprehensive expression. But, says Wagner, Beethoven's symphonies, and all instrumental music expressing anything more than mere "tone-play," awaken in the listener that troublesome question, "Why ? Wherefore ?" which the musician cannot answer, and which only the addition of the dramatic action can satisfy. We might perhaps be allowed to question whether Wagner's own employment of all the resources of a great orchestra to illustrate such glorified pantomime as *Lohengrin* and parts of the *Nibelungen* amount to, with their "real horses," and dwarfs, and dragons, and phantasmagoric effects, is not calculated in its own way to provoke a more unanswerable "*Warum?*" than anything in Beethoven's symphonies could awaken ; or whether it can be seriously

urged that a listener who felt the want of an ultimate meaning to the first movement of the *Eroica* Symphony would really feel his intellectual enjoyment and perception heightened by the vision of the hero behind the footlights with a tin helmet and shield. But the fact is that the "Why?" spoken of only exists in the minds of those who are under the domination of a theory, or who are deficient in musical education, perception, or sympathy, and consequently unable to apprehend the "unknown tongue" of the musical poet; or if to others the "Why?" exist at all, it is in a form which neither wishes nor requires an answer. To attempt to answer it by a definite explanation is to substitute a finite pleasure and significance for an infinite one—to bring down music from its real "poetic basis" to the prosaic level demanded by listeners who are destitute of feeling and imagination. This is the case to some extent even with so poetic a piece of programme music as the Pastoral Symphony, which is accordingly the one generally presented to "popular" audiences, who are furnished with annotations telling them where to look out for the nightingale, and where for the thunderstorm, &c. Its successor, the Symphony in A, appeals to higher intellectual perceptions, and demands a much higher class of audience, for its appreciation. That this also sprang from some definite mood or impulse in the composer's mind we may readily imagine; but should we gain anything if, in listening to that wonderful intermediate episode in the *Scherzo*—that slower movement which seems to speak of some vague and solemn glory such as "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard"—we were to be offered a label to tell us the meaning of it? Would we not rather listen in the spirit a modern poet has expressed in a sonnet "written during music":—

"O! what is *this* that knows the road I came"?[1]

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[1] It is to be regretted that Rossetti subsequently deprived this sonnet, a really fine poetic expression of the philosophy of music, of all its best point and significance by reprinting it with an alteration which forces another meaning upon it.

The absurdities, again, which the attempt to tack a definite meaning to music sometimes gives rise to are instructive enough. In Mendelssohn's *Meerestille* Overture, for instance, the little flourishes for the flute before the *Allegro* commences had generally been fancied as indicating the first "catspaws" of the breeze on the water; but it appears that the composer, when asked one day about it, laughingly confessed that he believed the passage had been suggested by a little pasteboard figure of an opera-dancer on the mast of a fishing boat, which kicked up a leg when the breeze caught it. One afternoon, at a Crystal Palace concert some years ago, an overture by a clever young English musician, Mr. Gadsby, was played, which its author had named "The Witches' Frolic" (a heading from the *Ingoldsby Legends*) as a title appropriate to a work of rather piquant and faërie character. But this was not enough; and three or four pages of the programme were filled with a reprint of Barham's literary vulgarity, that the audience might lose nothing towards the right understanding of the music. It is due to the composer to say that he denied any complicity in this remarkable effort of programme analysis; but such a *reductio ad absurdum* is none the less suggestive of what the "poetic basis" theory may lead us to. A more serious possible result, already too largely illustrated, is that, if music is to be valued for an arbitrary meaning attached to it, beauty of melody and purity of harmonic relation come to be, theoretically if not practically, of no consequence; and a determined theorist may persuade his ears, on principle, to like almost anything. It is only on such a supposition that one can understand the existence of the extraordinary cacophony presented to us as music in some recent instrumental compositions, and in many parts of Wagner's operas.[1] Of

[1] Some of those who have had Liszt's pianoforte Concerto in A inflicted upon them will appreciate the point of this remark. Look at such a passage, again, as that for the horns in the *Rheingold*, at the moment when Alberic puts on his helmet, with its horrible false relation which almost sets the teeth on edge. To write such a sequence is almost like declaring that two and two make five.

course we know all that has been said and will be said by the apologists of the new theory; how every innovator in composition has been condemned in turn; how Mozart's quartetts were scouted as inharmonious, and how the Pastoral Symphony, when first performed at the London Philharmonic Society, drove a gifted but conservative English musician from the room; and all the rest of it. But this is an argument which is not capable of the indefinite application claimed for it, because there is the irrefragable fact that music has at all events an ultimate basis of physical law and mathematical proportion, which you must bow to. There is only one combination of sounds on which the ear can finally rest with satisfaction,[1] and the whole philosophy of musical composition, broadly stated, is the art of progressing logically and yet with apparent freedom from one such point of repose to another. The final resolution may be indefinitely deferred —even, as in Wagner's later practice, throughout an entire act; though the ear feels keenly the want of repose in that case. Combinations the most inharmonious in themselves may recur over and over again (as is constantly the case with the two greatest masters of construction, Bach and Mozart), but they will never offend so long as the ear can recognize their logical relation to the context, and to the unalterable statics of harmony.

Nothing, it may be added, tends more to awaken suspicion as to the real importance or greatness of Wagner's contribution to the progress of the art than the atmosphere of intolerance, exaggeration, and what can only be called "humbug," which seems to surround it everywhere. A reference to an essay by Mr. Dannreuther, which appeared some time ago in *Macmillan's Magazine*, in which the ground was cleared for Wagner by the direction of a fire of abuse against every previous and contemporary opera composer (with a partial reservation in favour of Gluck and Mozart), will give

[1] See Chapter I., page 36, for an example of the curious illustration of this which Wagner himself furnishes at the conclusion of *Lohengrin*.

some idea of the lengths to which the fervour of the clique of proselytisers is carried; and if I were to quote some average specimens of the eloquence of inspired Wagnerian prophets, some of my readers would probably think a hoax was being put upon them. What the smaller fry of the Anglo-German critics are equal to may be imagined from what we find in the writings of the late Mr. Hüffer, their best representative, where, amid repeated sneers at "the British Philistine,"[1] we read such sentences as, "the Titan was again making giant strides towards Utopia"; or are invited to recognize, in the critic's "rough outline" of Wagner, "the features of a grand immortal countenance, wrought by Nature's own hands, and stamped by her with the indelible sign of genius; a man whom you must reckon with one way or another; if not, the book of artistic revelation will be for ever sealed against you with seven seals:" a sentence which only wants Mr. Burchell's monosyllabic comment to make it complete. To point out the futility and vulgarity, even from a literary point of view, of this kind of writing would probably be as useless in regard to those who are content to indulge in it, as it would be superfluous, I trust, in regard to most of my readers.

It would not be fair, certainly, to saddle Wagner with all the sins of his admirers; but I do distinctly decline to contemplate his method and his productions as the vestibule to a higher and more intellectual development of the art of music than has yet been attained; not only for reasons already given, in regard to the union of music with spectacle, but also because the whole *genre* of his art shows the

[1] It is, perhaps, scarcely worth while, but one may just remind these gentlemen who (following the lead of Wagner himself) are perpetually sneering at English musical taste, that the greater artist and man whom Wagner professed to idolize, left no precedent for such a feeling; on the contrary, he seldom mentions the English in his letters without special expressions of respect, and it was one of his chief wishes "to spend some time amongst them in their own country." But Beethoven, like every genius of the highest order, was cosmopolitan in his sympathies.

qualities which have always marked a period of decadence—the preference for impulse and sentiment before form, colour before outline; and the intense self-consciousness as to method and principle; for, in spite of the sneers with which this argument is greeted by the partisans of Wagner (whose peculiar irritability on this point betrays their consciousness of its significance), the unquestionable fact remains that in no past art, and in no past period, have any of the greatest and most enduring achievements of art-creation arisen out of theories proclaimed with sound of trumpet in the market-place. Theories are the refuge of a genius deficient in spontaneous power.

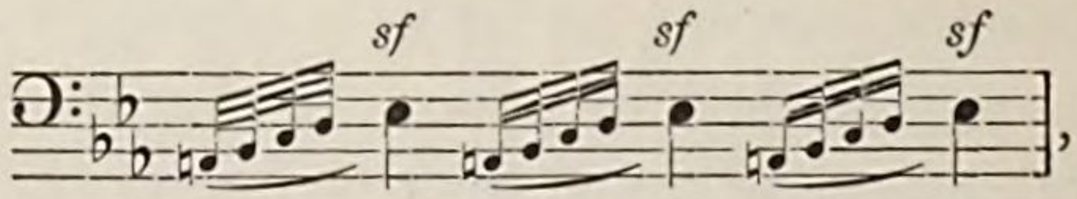
The truth about Wagner may perhaps be summed up in the conclusion that he was the most remarkable charlatan who has ever appeared in art. The definition does not necessarily imply contempt, still less indifference. The charlatan is a type of character which goes to make up the great stage-play of humanity; a type which will always be recurring, which is often picturesque in itself, which may be useful at the moment, and which is powerless to do any lasting mischief. We have had a recent brilliant incarnation of the type in politics, in Lord Beaconsfield; another in painting, in Gustave Doré, who could not draw the figure, but had a facility for making scenic effects; who discovered that the English middle class had an appetite for Bible subjects treated in a sensational manner, and fed them accordingly with food convenient for them. The qualities universally characteristic of charlatanism in all walks of life are brag and insincerity. I shall, no doubt, be told that this very definition at once removes Wagner from such a category, and that no artist was ever more desperately in earnest than he. I reply that I am quite aware that he has been clever enough to induce many thousands of his generation to think so, but that his whole life is an evidence of the contrary; that he was in reality one of the most vain, vulgar, and selfish egotists that ever lived, and that his aim was not to advance

art, but to push Wagner. His first important opera was a direct and barefaced imitation of Meyerbeer, and as such is a complete failure, characterized by the *clinquant* of Meyerbeer without his talent ("genius" is hardly the word to use in connection with Meyerbeer); and finding that it was a failure, he revenged himself by wholesale abuse of the composer whose work he had unsuccessfully endeavoured to imitate. His whole attitude and feeling towards other musicians seems to have been actuated by the consideration how far they stood in his way or how far they could be of use to him. His correspondence with Liszt forms a series of expressions of generosity on the side of Liszt and petulant demands for assistance on the part of his correspondent. His dogged persistence in making a path for himself, and in forcing himself on the world and fighting his way to a brilliant position in the teeth of wholesale opposition, shows no doubt a spirit of determination which in itself is a form of genius, and if displayed in a great cause is one of the noblest qualities in humanity. Here it was displayed to force on the public a false theory of the art, without the exploitation of which there was no chance of a prominent place for Wagner.

It is one of the special characteristics of the charlatan in art to have a nostrum, a special system, compared with which all others are mistaken and illogical; and the promulgation of and insistence on this system is made to fill the place of real power and originality of design, and to exonerate the author from the necessity of sound study and acquirement in technique. Among smaller men, a musician who has not ability enough to succeed in the ordinary paths invents a new notation; a painter who is in the same predicament invents a new theory of perspective, and shows that all other painters, who have gained a reputation which has been denied to him, are hopelessly in the wrong in their method. This practice of contemning and sneering at all other artists practising the same art is a constantly recurring note of charlatanism. We see exactly the same thing in

Vogler, who was a kind of minor type of Wagner. Gluck was too highminded a man, too much of a gentleman, to have fallen into this kind of pettiness; but in Gluck we see illustrated the same position that we find again in regard to Wagner—that of a man deficient in constructive power in the art, but endeavouring to make a place for himself as a reformer in the method of opera. Like Wagner, Gluck (though I think a man of much finer character than Wagner) was of a spirit restless, ambitious, and eager for distinction. Had he contented himself with musical composition in the ordinary paths, he would have been nowhere in instrumental music, and in opera he would only have achieved the ordinary success attending the works of a composer who could originate some fine melodies, but had no grasp of the higher forms of composition. Handel's brusque criticism on one of Gluck's earlier works, "He knows no more of counterpoint als mein cook," appears to have been the simple truth. Any competent listener who will compare *Orfeo* with *Don Giovanni* must perceive that, while in the latter we are dealing with a musician who has all the resources of the art at his command, in the former we are listening only to the music of a gifted amateur, with a feeling for melody and for dramatic expression, but who in the matter of counterpoint and construction never ventures out of leading-strings, never attempts anything but the simplest and most *naïve* combinations. *Orfeo* depends for its real interest upon stage effect and grouping, and on the two great airs for the principal character, which no doubt are noble movements, the second one especially, and, though easy in regard to execution, demand a great singer to realize their full expression.[1] But apart from

[1] It is impossible to refer to this subject without a word of protest against the absurdly exaggerated praise lavished on the performance of this opera which made one of the events of the London musical season of 1890. As far as the general mounting and *mise-en-scène* are concerned, the performance could only be described as wretchedly inadequate; and if the lady who took the part of Orfeo is to be accepted as a great singer, all that can be said is that the present generation of newspaper critics, and those who are led by them, are very easily satisfied in that respect.

them there is really nothing striking or remarkable in the music at all, as music. In some of his orchestral effects and devices, no doubt, Gluck evinced perceptions quite in advance of his period; in the manner in which the barking of "three-headed Cerberus" is symbolized by the basses in *Orfeo*, for instance, 

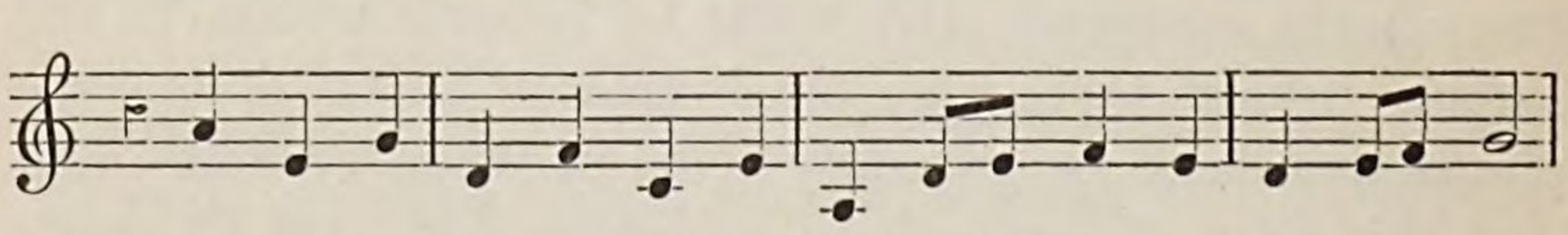
, and in the characteristically savage effect of the long drum, cymbals, and piccolo flute which accompany the dance of the Scythian pirates in *Iphigenia in Tauris*. Such passages indicate a strong feeling for picturesque quality in instrumental effect, a kind of perception which was a novelty in the time of Gluck, whose effects of this kind, though simple and *naïve* in comparison with the rich and sonorous instrumentation of modern days, still keep their place as orchestral devices full of individuality and character. Here, again, there is a decided parallel between Gluck and Wagner, the latter composer being unquestionably one of the greatest masters of orchestral effect and colouring. But it is to be observed that this is a power entirely different in its nature from power of musical construction, in which latter power Wagner appears to me to be no more a master than Gluck, although his deficiency in this respect is shown not, as with Gluck, in a dread of venturing beyond the simplest combinations, but in the tossing together of an immense complication of notes without any clear logical system of relation or progression, such as we recognize in Bach and Mozart, and in most of the work of Beethoven. And it must also be observed that his very system of making the musical idea co-extensive with the words, and varying with every turn of their expression, in itself relieved him from the responsibility of attempting the most difficult task in music, and the greatest test of a composer's powers, that of carrying on a lengthened composition in accordance with a main and predominant design to which all the details should be duly subordinated. In

respect to this point I may quote an admirable piece of criticism by the late John Hullah, in reference to Marcello's *Psalms*. In his setting of the Psalms to music, Marcello, who wrote in the early part of the eighteenth century, adopted the method of treating the words in short sections, giving to every separate verse its own expression. Hullah says :—

"Throughout his work the frequent and sudden changes of sentiment in the text are followed by the music with a pertinacity often not only injurious to the effect of the latter, but even inconsistent with anything like good musical construction ; and a sense of weariness comes over the most patient performer, reader, or hearer, who is long kept under the influence of Marcello's psalmody ; and this not from the length but from the *shortness* of the individual movements. This incessant coming to an end and beginning again is no doubt to be defended on the score of the abrupt, fragmentary, and fitful character of the Psalms themselves ; but it may be questioned whether with Marcello it was not a result as much of necessity as of choice, and whether he has not availed himself of this restless variety in order to hide his deficiency in constructive skill."

It would probably be untrue to assert that Wagner, in the same spirit, deliberately chose a form in which he could hide his own want of constructive power ; but it is certainly true that this is the result, and that music which, like that of his operas, is entirely devoid of continuity of musical form, is easy to the composer, and tends to become tedious to the listener, even if there were much greater beauty of melodic phrase than is to be generally found in Wagner's work ; and that this form of composition exactly suited both Wagner's powers and his weakness. Perception of dramatic effect he had very strongly developed ; perception of instrumental colouring he must have had naturally, and had developed to the highest point by long practice ; grasp over musical construction he had not, and his theory of musical drama enabled him to dispense with it, to his own satisfaction at all events, even in passages where continuity of musical construction would seem imperatively called for. The so-called

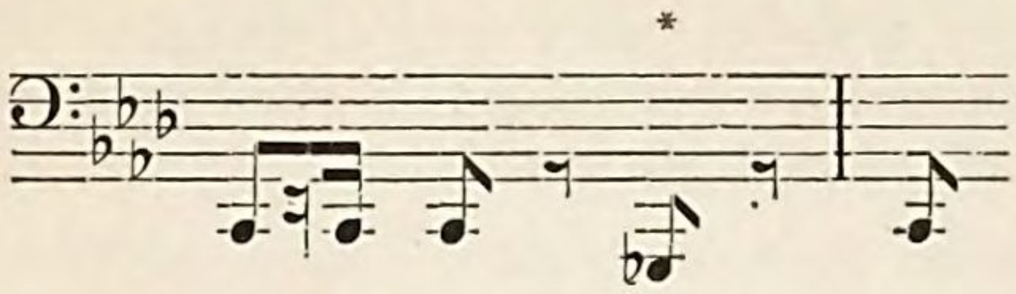
"Funeral March" over Siegfried I have seen characterised as one of the finest and most impressive of modern compositions. In point of fact, it is not a "composition" at all; it is a string of instrumental ejaculations, so to speak, put together on no design of any kind, and only in any sense intelligible in connection with the spectacle of the funeral procession on the stage. It may be said that this is just what gives the music its essentially dramatic character. Even if we grant this, it only brings us round to the dilemma suggested a few pages previously, viz. that this detailed interpenetration of music and stage action can only be accomplished by sacrificing music to the exigencies of dramatic action, just as much as in the old form of opera dramatic action was sacrificed to the exigencies of music. Incessant formless recitative, however impassioned and however picturesquely instrumented, cannot claim to be music in the sense in which music has been understood by the great masters of the art, and only reminds one of Beethoven's rather cruel remark to Himmel, when the latter had been extemporising to him: "Well, when are you going to begin?" Nowhere is this more emphatically felt than at the few moments in Wagner's operas in which he forgets his theory and breaks out for a moment into lyrical and rhythmical music, as at the scene of the awakening of Brünnhilde:—



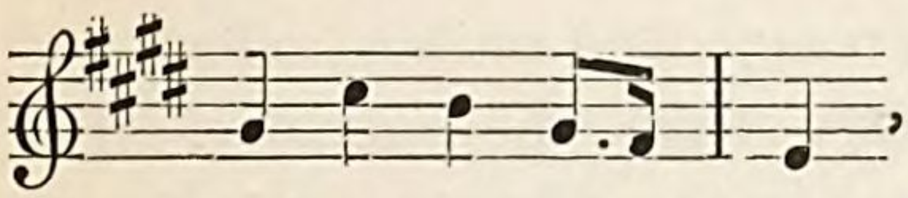
It is as if the music, which had been dragging lamely on the ground for an indefinite period, had suddenly found its wings and soared aloft, rejoicing in its freedom.

Nor, again, has the arbitrary construction of phrases, which are to be labelled with this or that meaning, anything in common with true melodic invention and expression. There is a grotesque humour, no doubt, in the characterization of Fafner by the passage in which what appears as if meant for

an interval of a fourth is incorrectly given as an augmented fourth (through the flattening of the G at *)—



producing an effect of unwieldy clumsiness analogous to that of the clown dance in the Trio of the Pastoral Symphony: though in both cases the question remains—Is this *music?* But the majority of the *leit-motivs* in the Tetralogy have not even this degree of inherent expressiveness. With the exception of the motive of the awakening of Brünnhilde, quoted above, the "Walhalla motive," and the "Sleep motive,"



, there are scarcely any of these phrases which are either melodically beautiful or inherently expressive. They are simply arrangements of notes which are to to be taken to mean so many different things. In the method of working them there is a great deal of cleverness displayed, and in the effects of instrumentation there is more than cleverness; in the handling of that particular form of musical expression which consists in characteristic combinations of tone and employment of instruments Wagner exhibits real genius. But the selection of arbitrary groups of notes, destitute of melodic expression or coherence, to represent certain meanings, is a process which does not presuppose any originating genius in musical composition at all: any one with an average knowledge of music can do it; and such arbitrary linking of ideas to notes, under the name of musical composition, involves a confusion between two distinct classes of mental perception, analogous to that into which Sordello is said to have fallen in his attempt to produce poems in a deliberately reconstructed language—

"Fond essay !
Piece after piece that armour broke away ;
Because perceptions whole, like that he sought
To clothe, reject so pure a work of thought
As language : Thought may take Perception's place,
But hardly co-exist in any case."

There are passages, no doubt, in which poetic expression predominates over the mere arbitrary choice of musical symbols, as in the enchantment of Brünnhilde in the Walküre; the scene in which the maiden, in her martial dress, is put to sleep surrounded by the circle of fire, while Wotan looks regretfully at her, and the orchestra mingles its expressive melodic phrase with the shimmering passages which seem to represent the flickering of the fire. This is a truly poetic piece of combined scenic and musical effect, and one not to be lightly dismissed from the memory. The accompaniment to the first scene in the *Rheingold*, again, has a remarkably "under water" effect, which is hardly appreciated apart from the scene, with which the music, with its thickly entwined convolutions of sound, seems to have some kind of subtle affinity impossible to analyze. On the other hand, the frequent use of the band to produce a tumultuous *crescendo* effect, to work up the listener's feelings to a climax, becomes in performance even more of a mere mannerism than it appears in the score. It is had recourse to over and over again until it palls on the ear, and entirely fails of its intended effect, nor can I see that there is in these passages anything of higher intellectual value, musically speaking, than is to be found in the equally mannered *crescendos* with which Rossini winds up his overtures. The Wagner *crescendo* is, of course, far more full and satisfying to the ear in mere instrumental effect; but beyond that, it is, like Rossini's favourite overture climax, little more than an appeal to the nervous excitability of the audience. And that is what a great deal of Wagner's music really comes to ; it is addressed, not to the intellect, but to the nervous system, and un-

happily this holds good even in passages where, from the poetic situation, we have every right to expect something higher. Wagner's musical portrayal of love scenes contains far more of passion than of affection. The long duet between the two lovers in the second act of *Tristan*, in which there is, no doubt, a certain wild pathos, appears to me to be only caterwauling translated into musical expression. It may be argued, perhaps, that as the feeling between Tristan and Isolde was an amorous passion kindled unawares by an unholy magic, this was the true musical expression of it; and if that idea was in Wagner's mind, it may be conceded that he has accomplished his aim.[1] But the same excuse cannot apply to the scene between Siegmund and Sieglinde, where he hails her ecstatically as "bride and sister" (a sort of relation which, however in place in a mythological dictionary, is not a very pleasing idea to thrust forward before a civilized audience), and which, taken in conjunction with the demonstrations of the orchestra, simply portrays the excitement of sexual passion—a conclusion emphasized by Wagner's printed stage-direction, "Er zieht sie mit wüthender Gluth an sich. Der Vorhang fällt schnell:"[2] leaving the hearer under the distinct impression that it was quite time it did fall. Of

[1] Compare Matthew Arnold:—

"All red with blood the whirling river flows,
The wide plain rings, the dazed air throbs with blows.
Upon us are the chivalry of Rome,
Their spears are down, their steeds are bathed in foam.
'Up, Tristram, up!' men cry, 'thou moon-struck knight!
What foul fiend rides thee? On into the fight!'
—Above the din her voice is in my ears;
I see her form glide through the crossing spears—
Iseult. . . ."

That is a higher and keener note of pathos than Wagner's; a higher than Wagner was capable of striking.

[2] "He draws her to him with burning passion. The curtain falls quickly." No doubt—

"In Saturn's reign
Such mixture was not held a stain;"

but Wagner's legend does not admit this palliation, as it is distinctly implied

the nobility and the chivalry of love there is not a hint in the setting; in these matters Wagner (*Tannhäuser* notwithstanding) seems to rise no higher than the idea of animal passion; at all events, his music suggests nothing higher. But even this is not so bad as the machinery from the circus and the pantomime which is inflicted on us: the wretched dragon that spouts real steam out of its nostrils, and is killed with a lath sword; the Valkyrie maidens drawn across the top of the scene on rocking horses; the still more absurd "real horse" that acts as Brünnhilde's charger, and is lugged in and out, in the last two plays, with a pertinacity which suggests "Scenes in the Life of a Cab-horse" as a sub-title for the work: and all this (save the mark!) for the elevation of the art of music to a higher sphere than it had ever risen to before! Unfortunately it is not even amusing: it is far too solemn for that. I can recall no musical performance having a professedly serious aim which left on me such a sense of utter weariness as the *Götterdämmerung;* weariness combined with an uncomfortable sense that one ought to be ashamed of being seen listening for hours to ugly music accompanying an absurd and puerile stage play, and leading up naturally to the feeling of relief and emancipation which I heard expressed by one of the audience, after witnessing the conflagration of the palace of the gods, "Well, thank God, we have seen the last of Wotan!"

The Holy Sacrament scene in *Parsifal*, which, like some other portions of this opera, I have heard only in the concert room, appears to me to be the finest and most impressive musical conception to which Wagner has risen; it is more coherent, less fragmentary, than any other movement he has written, and left on my mind an impression of grandeur and breadth of style which is not to be met with elsewhere in

that the guilty passion of the parents brought a curse upon the child (Siegfried). In plain English, an important point in the legend turns upon an act of incest, which is represented as all but consummated on the stage.

his works. The subject, treated in the mystical spirit of mediæval faith, is one that ought to inspire any composer with something great, and in this case, so far as one can judge from a single hearing, he seems to me to have risen above himself. But some of the leading *leit-motivs* of *Parsifal* (melodies it would be absurd to call them) are so defiantly and preposterously unmusical and ugly as to suggest the conclusion that the composer was merely fooling his admirers to the top of their bent, and amusing himself by trying how much they would swallow. One of these *leit-motivs* is given as the last of the specimens of melody in Chapter I., page 9 (Ex. 9), by way of contrast with the examples of true melodial invention which precede it, and it is a curious specimen of what a composer may come to in defiantly following the lead of a false and tortuous theory, and throwing overboard art and nature alike.

The fact is that musical drama, whether on the old or the new model, is not the form of art which can or could ever be looked to, to realize the highest intellectual pleasure which music in itself is capable of affording. It cannot be made logical, because it is a combination of two arts, the conditions of which are essentially different. If the music is to proceed *pari passu* with dramatic action as it is carried on in spoken drama, this can only be achieved by spoiling the music. Nothing but a compromise can be looked for in such a case. People who are not musical do not, as far as I can see, want musical drama at all; the drama in its ordinary form is more interesting to them. People who are musical go to opera for the sake of the music; they have done so for generations, and small blame to them. The real weakness of lyric drama is that it weights the poetic and abstract art of music with the prosaic machinery and imitative tinsel of the stage. The strength of it lies in the opportunity which it gives for the use of music in the dramatic expression of character. Given certain personages placed by the story in certain situations, and we are to depict their character and feelings through

music, as we imagine they would have expressed those characters and feelings had it been natural to them to pause and express themselves in a musical composition. "But it is not natural for people to do so." Certainly not, any more than it is natural for people, when strongly moved, to sing in the recitative of Wagner or to speak in the blank verse of Shakespeare. The whole thing is a convention, whichever way you take it; why quarrel with one form of convention more than another? Opera is a more conventional form of art than drama—let so much be granted; "whether it be damned for that," as Falstaff says, "I know not," so long as it is consistent with its own convention. What we have a right to expect of it is that the story should be of interest in itself, that the words should have literary merit, that the musical expression of the characters should be clear, vivid, and consistent. There have been not a few operas in which these requirements have been conspicuously absent; in which the story is silly, the words sillier, the music merely pretty tunes with no individuality of character and no special reference to the personages represented. So far as Wagner's career may be considered as a campaign against this kind of stage piping, it has no doubt had an influence for good. It is true that his words are about as silly as those of any of his predecessors; but his stories have a poetic significance, and his music always keeps before it, as a primary object, the expression of character, although its power of doing this is wofully curtailed by the adoption of mere thematic labels in place of wrought-out composition. The effect which Wagner has exercised on European opera may be compared with that which the band of painters who used to be called "pre-Raffaellites" have exercised upon English painting. The analogy, indeed, is rather close. Both referred in the first instance to early Church art as a model; both directed violent and exaggerated condemnation against what they termed the "Pagan" school, represented in the one art by Raffaelle, in the other by Mozart; both combined a strong

profession of feeling as to the *morale* of art (I use the word "profession" advisedly) with an indifference to the ordinary elements of beauty and to the higher achievements of technical power; both were at daggers drawn with all the art of their contemporaries, and have been the centres each of a clique of critics distinguished by the solidarity of their opinions and what they called their judgments. It is not unreasonable, perhaps, to infer that the ultimate results of the two movements may be equally similar; and that as the pre-Raffaellite movement exercised a permanent influence on English painting, infusing into it a greater intensity of purpose and aim, and rendering impossible again the acceptance of the flaccid execution and weak sentimentality which characterized the painting of the preceding generation, while the extravagances and uncomelinesses of the new style have insensibly dropped away and been almost forgotten: so it may be ultimately recognized on all hands that, while Wagner has given a new impulse to musical drama, and has rendered impossible for the future any recurrence to the weak, gaudy and (in a sense) almost demoralizing tinsel style of modern Italian opera, nevertheless such a reform (in any permanent manner) is consistent with, if not dependent upon, the abrogation of Wagner's extravagances both of theory and practice, and that his partial and probably temporary success affords no excusable or logical ground for the combination of a school of German critics to defame and deface that fair and stately temple of absolute music, which is, or ought to be, the great intellectual pride and glory of their race.

CHAPTER VIII.

STERNDALE BENNETT.

AMONG the general musical public there was discernible, on the occasion of Sterndale Bennett's death, early in the year 1875, a certain undefinable movement of surprise at the unexpected impression which his loss seemed to have created; at the funeral in the Abbey, and the crowd of people, bearing names far better known to them than his, who assembled on that occasion to pay the last honours to the deceased musician. It seemed hardly to have occurred to the public mind that in the death of this quiet, unobtrusive gentleman, much sought after as a teacher, and of whose name as a composer they were just reminded now and then, at rare intervals, by the performance of one of his works, we had lost a man of rare and individual genius in an art in which England can boast of few distinguished names.

Not that England can be called in every sense an unmusical country. We have been among the earliest to recognize the genius of one or two of the world's greatest musicians, and in the present day an executant or interpreter of music of the highest rank is sure of a cordial welcome, and of sympathetic listeners, in the city which Mrs. Browning called "the meeting-place of souls." We have had our own great executants also; in vocal music (a traditional heritage of the country) some of the highest rank, and among instrumental executants we can show not a few who stand at least very high. But if

we turn from the interpreters to the creators of music, we are forced to confess that, in comparison with the great masters of the art, our native composers have seemed rather as children playing with it as an amusement. No doubt a considerable list may be made up of names not to be mentioned without respect, appended to compositions not to be listened to but with pleasure by all discreet hearers. But scarcely among any of these can we recognize that individuality of style, that distinctly original mode of thought and expression, without which no artist, however pleasing and genial his productions, can claim a permanent niche in the Temple of Fame. The early English school of vocal part-music, noble and dignified as it is, is but an echo of Palestrina; and its greatest representatives, Gibbons, Byrd, and Wilbye, are scarcely distinguishable from each other in style, and are only marked out from their contemporaries by a greater breadth and power in the treatment of materials common to all. For in those early days of music, as in mediæval architecture, individuality was not; the art was the production of the time, rather than of special minds. Then we have the later cathedral composers, whose best works were mostly echoes of Handel, modified in manner to some extent by the musical limitations of a cathedral service in regard to executive; among whom the prominent names of Boyce and Croft are followed by a host of lesser lights, now in the limbo of forgetfulness as far as the great world of music is concerned, but preserved, mummy-fashion, by being embalmed among the relics of cathedral worship. Handel's "pellows-plower," Greene, survives chiefly in virtue of one fine and striking movement, "Therefore will not we fear" (from the anthem "God is our hope and strength"), which is not unworthy of Handel himself; and at a later period, Crotch and the two Wesleys, father and son, struck the same chords with considerable power and effect. But of not one of these can it be said that they had a style of their own, or that they have obtained any wide or general recognition out of the range of the

sounds of the cathedral organ. The English cathedral service music (anthems especially) is, taken collectively, a distinct contribution to the forms of musical composition, and has its precise parallel nowhere else; but then its composers have to be taken collectively also; they have not (with one exception) strength to stand alone. The name of Bishop, who (one can scarcely credit it) was set up as the rival to Weber when the latter visited England, is now only to be seen in the programmes of parish concerts in country districts; there is a real beauty in some of his music, but it is of an essentially *bourgeois* type. The statue of Balfe at Drury Lane is about the sole surviving testimony to the fact that he was once regarded as an eminent opera composer. Concerning English composers now living this is not the time or place to speak particularly. But since the great name of Purcell (the exception referred to above), that of Sterndale Bennett seems the only one we can bring forward of a native composer who evinced distinctly original genius, and made a style of his own.

Of course no comparison between the two is intended to be suggested. That Purcell was, potentially, one of the world's great tone-poets, must be obvious to all who are familiar with the fragmentary works which he has left, and who can distinguish between the accidental and essential, and can recognize the voice of genius from behind the mask of an antiquated style. Purcell's misfortune (and ours) was the double one of his having both lived and died too early. He was born at least half a century too soon, before the resources of the art had been so expanded as to afford him those "sail-broad vans" which the flight of his genius required, and he died too soon to have become fully conscious of his own power, or of the extent to which he might have enlarged its borders. But even as it is he has left on everything he undertook an impress of concentrated power of imagination and expression which goes far to make us forget the restricted nature of the means at his command; as in

the best of his anthems, in his *Te Deum*,[1] in the extraordinary madman's song, or in the colossal duet for two basses, "Awake, ye dead." Beside works which, however imperfect in form, are so great in scale and idea, we cannot place the productions of the late representative of modern English music. The earlier composer reached sublimity of expression: the later one has attained to beauty, finish, and individuality of form, and to sentiment of the highest and most refined type; but something beyond these qualities is needed to secure a place among those great artists who have spoken deep things to our souls, and have moved the hearts of the people, "as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind."

Of these, then, it must be admitted, Sterndale Bennett was not. But he had this in common with his greater predecessor, that what he gave us was eminently his own. There is a popular idea that he was a mere imitator of Mendelssohn, which might be supported, no doubt, by reference to some of his pianoforte compositions; but the idea, in a general sense, is quite erroneous. His pianoforte works, for the most part, are clearly marked by his own specialities of manner, feeling, and treatment; and, in regard to his instrumental music generally, it may be said that his affinities were really rather with Mozart than with Mendelssohn, only with the difference of treatment in detail which inevitably arose from the altered feeling and the altered conditions of execution in the present day. He had that peculiar feeling for symmetry of construction and delicacy of finish which characterized Mozart, and the same complete grasp over the form of his compositions which enabled him, on one occasion, like Mozart, to play his own part in a concerted piece for piano and orchestra without ever having even written out the pianoforte part. As a constructor he had a power beyond Mendelssohn's, and as a composer for the pianoforte he possessed that faculty for the invention of original and effective

[1] I know not whether this has ever been given by the Bach Choir; it is well worth their attention, as also is Purcell's greatest anthem, "O, give thanks."

"figures" which Mendelssohn, by his own confession, wanted. His principal choral works—*The Woman of Samaria* and *The May Queen*—and his Symphony in G minor do not appear to me to afford any excuse for a reference to Mendelssohn, or, for that matter, to any other composer: they are his own style entirely.

If we endeavour to define the characteristics of Sterndale Bennett's genius, we become conscious of two conditions in his practice of his art, in regard to both of which he is entirely at variance with the prevalent modern spirit in the art, and one of which fully accounts for the comparative unpopularity of his works with the majority of amateurs. He belonged to that rare and interesting class of men of genius who are, in a special sense, *artistic* artists—who write or paint or compose for the sake of the art; with whom the means are of almost as much interest as the end; in whose eyes finish of form is one of the most important objects, and whose works therefore present to other producers in the same art a special interest which is only partially comprehended by the *dilettante* mind. In such works musicians find the same kind of pleasure which literary minds find in the writings of Jane Austen, of whom Scott observed that, though "he could do the 'big bow-wow business' as well as any one, those delicate touches of hers were beyond him." In music "the big bow-wow business" is now in full career, nor need one wish to see it checked till it has fulfilled its mission for good or evil. But for the present the result is that the spirit and intent of a musical work is everything, the form nothing, both with composers and hearers; and "æsthetic" frequenters of concert rooms are indifferent as to balance of form in composition, or correctness and finish in performance, if only they can be thrilled by sonorous scoring and "impassioned" execution. This is, perhaps, an inevitable reaction against the too cold taste of a previous generation of English executants; but the feeling which underlies it is essentially amateurish, not artistic. It is no wonder therefore that such

unobtrusive yet finished workmanship as Bennett's obtains little favour at present. His little gem of a symphony, already referred to, is seldom played, and when given last season at the Crystal Palace, was patted on the back, so to speak, in the programme book, as "pleasant to listen to," and dismissed with even fainter praise in critical notices. It is not colossal music, certainly, but it is one of the most perfectly and faultlessly beautiful pieces of orchestral music ever written, almost like Greek art in its finish and symmetry, where every note plays its own part in the *ensemble;* while the first movement stands as a typical example of the fact that music need not be noisy in order to be truly passionate in expression. But Bennett's music falls short, too, in another demand of the reigning taste, which wills that instrumental music should have its meaning, its intention, its "poetic basis"—I had almost said its moral purpose. The fallacy of this view of the function of the art is dealt with elsewhere in this volume: it is sufficient to observe here that of this school Sterndale Bennett was not. His instrumental compositions, like those of Mozart, for the most part "mean" nothing; the occasional suggestive titles to them serve rather as distinguishing mottoes than as really limiting the hearer's associations in regard to them. The *Parisina* Overture is the prelude to a tale of passion, but any other title suggesting that general idea would fit it equally. The *Paradise and the Peri* Overture is of course a declared exception, in which the passages illustrated are pointedly interwoven with the music; and his latest pianoforte work, *The Maid of Orleans* Sonata, is another important exception. He commenced a set of pianoforte pieces illustrative of *The Months;* but of these only "January" and "February" were written, and were not very successful, as perhaps he himself felt. The natural bent of Bennett's genius lay more in the direction of abstract music, in spite of these occasional concessions to the taste of the day; and he remains for the present one of the latest representatives of that purely intellectual school of

music which illustrates no fixed idea, but addresses itself to the hearer's general sense of melodic beauty and sentiment, of harmonic proportion and logical relation.

In further characterization of the special quality of Sterndale Bennett's art, it may be said that his genius was essentially that of the pianoforte. He was, so to speak, a pianist by nature. His numerous compositions for his favourite instrument have not that orchestral largeness and breadth of manner which belongs to the pianoforte compositions of Beethoven, and in a lesser degree to those of Mendelssohn. But they are remarkable and most interesting, in addition to their intrinsic beauty, as specimens of composition in which the capabilities of the instrument are strictly consulted—which represent precisely what the pianoforte can best do, and that only, and what no other instrument can imitate. There is not anywhere in art an instance of a nicer perception of means to an end than is furnished by the pianoforte works of Bennett. The hardness and glitter which characterize some of these compositions, and which amateurs of the sentimental school (if they are acquainted with them, which they generally are not) find so cold and unsympathetic, are only the outcome of this consideration of the peculiar genius of the instrument, pushed to its completest result. For the pianoforte essentially is not an instrument for the expression of melody and of sentiment; it is only made so for convenience sake, and by partially ignoring its special capabilities and limitations. Primarily it is a medium for the display of glittering and brilliant effect; a highly elaborated instrument of the "percussion" class, in fact; and Bennett's pianoforte music is written with an obviously predominating sympathy with this view of the capabilities of the instrument.[1] It is this perception of

[1] His *Trio* for pianoforte and strings, however, shows a curious experiment in the contrary direction, making the pianoforte, in the slow movement, the instrument for sustaining a singing melody; its comparative want of sustaining or *cantando* quality being masked by employing against it the still shorter and sharper effect of the *pizzicato* of the strings.

the percussion quality of the pianoforte which imparts to his compositions of this class much of their peculiar style—their hard, bright, glittering effect, which many find unsympathetic; but this special treatment of the instrument is of the highest artistic interest, and renders his pianoforte music more characteristic than that of Mendelssohn; it has less breadth of manner as a rule, but is marked by a truer artistic instinct and a more refined handling of the instrument. That the composer could use the pianoforte in its secondary function, as an instrument for the expression of melody and sentiment, is proved by such movements as the *Romanza* of the Third Concerto and the *Barcarolle* of the Fourth, the latter being one of the few of his compositions which has to some extent found its way to the popular mind. In this latter, too, the characteristic touches of detail are not less exquisite than the melodious quality of the leading theme; such as that rippling phrase for the solo instrument which, once heard, can never be forgotten; or the joining of the flute with the piano at the return of the principal subject, suggesting, according to Macfarren's pretty fancy in his analysis of the work, "the reflection of loved faces in the sleeping water."

Bennett's short oratorio, *The Woman of Samaria*, must be admitted, I think, to be the most really individual contribution to this class of composition since *St. Paul* and *Elijah*. It can never be popular with the mass of hearers: it is open, no doubt, to the charge of being deficient in force and fervour; but its beauties are of so delicate and refined an order that, on the rare occasions when it is given, it can never be heard without the greatest interest for the most educated class of listeners. There is no page in modern music of this class in which the spirit of Bach seems so revived as in the opening symphony and chorus, with its remarkable combination of *chorale* and instrumental movement in opposing rhythms. The solos are not of the class with which great vocal effect is produced, but they are exquisitely expressive of

the feeling of the words, as also is the beautiful and pathetic setting of the hymn, "Abide with me." The subject itself is not a good one for oratorio, as there is not really enough in it to found an oratorio upon, and the words of the choruses might almost as well belong to any other Biblical subject; there is a want of dramatic coherence. But for the few at least, if not for the many, the work will survive for its intrinsic beauty.

The more popular cantata, *The May Queen*, is still worse hampered by perhaps one of the silliest *librettos* ever written, in which any interest for its own sake is impossible; and musically speaking, the work suggests a regret that (supposing the "book" improved) the composer did not make an opera of it. The music is most happily illustrative of scenic effect and character—of scenic effect in the buoyant Maypole Chorus, where we almost seem to see the merry group of dancers swing past—

"With a laugh as we go round"—

and in the stately pageant music, especially the passage at the words "Thames is proud," where the whole flotilla seems to come suddenly upon us, as it were, round a bend of the river ("Hark! what fine change is in the music"); and of character and feeling in the air of the lover, and in the jovial bragging song of the supposed "Robin Hood," with its genial touches of humour in the accompaniment. While Bennett thus evinces here his power of characteristic and humorous dramatic expression in music—a power of which, unfortunately, he merely gives us a passing glimpse—his contributions to the list of modern Church anthems form another success in a very different direction. The anthem "Remember now thy Creator" is marked by deep religious feeling; and "The fool hath said in his heart" is a notable example of bold and expressive treatment of this class of composition, though the dramatic setting of the phrase "There is no God" has, I believe, somewhat "vexed the

souls of deans" with an uneasy suspicion of an irreverent element.

But one cannot quit the subject of Bennett's vocal music without a reference to those two groups of songs, "with English and German words," of which one or two only can be said to be popularized, and those (of course) not the best. Most of these songs have the advantage of having been written to really good and suggestive words; and of the artistic perfection of some of them, both in regard to expression and finish of form, it would hardly be possible to speak too highly. The pianoforte accompaniments are as beautiful and finished as the vocal part, and divide the interest with it, though without ever obscuring or overweighting the voice. Among the finest are "Musing on the roaring ocean," in which a broad and noble melody for the voice floats, as it were, over a *moto continuo* accompaniment (just suggestive of the idea of the unquiet sea, without the slightest touch of realism), and "Wilt thou forget the happy hours?" in which Sterndale Bennett has penetrated to the very heart of Shelley's melancholy lines, both in the song and in the broken and agitated though quite regularly constructed accompaniment. The perfect execution of this song, in regard to *nuances* of feeling and expression, might be taken as a test of true artistic insight of singer and accompanist. The same might be said of some others of the set, and indeed it is difficult to know which to prefer from these two little garlands of song. When we consider the pure and spontaneous flow of the melody, the delicate suggestiveness of the accompaniments, and the distinct individuality of design and of sentiment in each of these little compositions, we might fancy them the spiritual essence of some lost fragments of Greek art, which had somehow contrived to get themselves translated into music.

Among the causes which militate against the popular acceptance of Bennett's music, we may probably include his pronounced adhesion, both in theory and practice, to the

harmonic system of Day; a system which (as already suggested in Chapter I.) appears to me to be merely a new and very suggestive generalization as to the harmonic relations of tones, no more really logical or physically true than the old system, though it was a brilliant attempt to give an appearance of physical law to a scale which has actually grown up by a succession of happy chances. Not, of course, that the general public has any opinion one way or the other on such a matter; but the hearty adoption of the theory tempted Bennett, apparently, into a constant playing with a class of harmonies which, if not less physically natural to the ear (as I believe) than the more ordinary combinations, are certainly less familiar and comprehensible to general hearers, who get an impression of a certain hardness and artificiality in the effect of his music, something which is unattractive to their ears, without their knowing exactly why. I may quote in illustration a sentence from an article on the composer contributed to Grove's *Dictionary of Music*:—

"It is the frequent use of what may be termed perhaps (borrowing an expression from colour) the 'secondary' rather than the 'primary' relations of harmony—the constant appeal to the logic rather than the mere sensuous hearing of the ear—which gives to his music that rather cold intellectual cast which is repelling to the average listener. In such a passage as this—



the ear of the uninitiated listener is almost startled by the closing E, like the sharp blow of a hammer, at the foot of an arpeggio passage which seems to presage a modulation into C through the dominant ninth on G."

The "accidental" D sharp, it is true, is a finger-post as to the intended predominance of the E tonality; but the combina-

tion, which is typical of many others in the composer's music, is ungrateful to the ordinary ear, and perhaps even the most sympathetic hearer may admit that there is a slight flavour of *caviare* about it.

But probably the element in the composer's character which was most antagonistic to the highest success is to be found in his artistic reserve and sensitiveness, his apparent want of confidence in himself, which apparently led to his long abstention from production during the latter portion of his life, and to his giving himself up to teaching to a degree which must inevitably have drawn off his best powers from composition. The second movement—the "Battle" movement—of his *Maid of Orleans* Sonata, shows, indeed, that the force of his genius was not impaired, this movement being one of the broadest and most impassioned compositions in modern pianoforte music. But the *finale* of the same Sonata, beautiful as its leading subject is, has by no means the finish of detail of his earlier writing, and appears hurried and perfunctory in execution. On the other hand, his characteristic reserve of artistic style is the source of some of the special beauty and individuality of his work. This is nowhere better illustrated than in the close of the *Paradise and the Peri* Overture. A less *spirituel* composer would have been tempted to seize the opportunity for a grand hymn of triumph at the entry of the Peri into Paradise. But Bennett recognized that the audience were not privileged to enter with the Peri. We hear for a moment the distant refrain of the hymn of the blessed, after which the composition closes quietly with a *pizzicato* chord from the strings; the gate of Paradise shuts, on us, as it were, and we are left outside. Nothing could be more poetically suggestive. It always reminds me of Bunyan's equally *spirituel* termination of the first part of his great allegory, where he looks in for a moment through the gate by which the pilgrims have entered Heaven, catching one glimpse of shining beings walking the celestial streets, and

concludes with that simple reflection, "which when I had seen, I wished myself among them."

One praise at least, and one of the highest that can be bestowed on any artist, can be claimed for Bennett without reservation. No composer was ever more uniformly high-minded in his aims. Not a bar of his could be quoted as being written for show or for the popular ear; as far as his genius went, he was a classic of the classics, writing only for the most refined and cultivated taste, and in the most finished and pure style. The kind of success which can and has been obtained in this country by the writing of clever and humorous comic operas (not by any means to be despised according to their *genre*) would have been abhorrent to the soul of Sterndale Bennett: one cannot for a moment imagine his name connected with such an enterprise. Some critics will probably be ready to say that no music which has so little in it for the masses can hope to retain a permanent position. The analogies of art history will hardly bear out this view, however. If we may draw a comparison between music and poetry, we might point to Horace as an instance of a poet who was essentially the poet of the few, and who was totally without sympathy for the masses, or care for their suffrages. Yet it is probable that we could name no literary reputation which is more absolutely safe, so far as it goes, than that of Horace. Finish of form is, in short, one of the most important elements in a permanent artistic reputation; and finish of form Bennett possessed in perfection, with much besides. His works will not, as has been already said, take their stand among those great musical inspirations which have moved all hearts; and it is quite possible that they may never attain a wide popularity. But I believe their reputation, with the esoteric circle at least, rests on a secure basis, and is certain to increase as their peculiar and rare beauties are more studied and appreciated; that they will be returned to frequently as sources of fresh and lasting pleasure by all who can appreciate

beauty without pretentiousness, and finish without ostentation; that they are such as—to borrow the words in which Wordsworth so beautifully gave expression to his own hopes of future recognition—

> "The high and tender Muses may accept
> With gracious smile, deliberately pleased."

CHAPTER IX.

ABOUT THE ORGAN.

"How do you know which stops to use?" is a question I have more than once heard from a bystander at the organ keyboard. Of course one might just as well ask a composer for the orchestra, "How do you know which instruments to use?" In either case it is a pure matter of æsthetic, with only the limitation in the case of the organ, as will be explained further on, that there are some few combinations which are practically impossible, as they would result in cacophony. Generally speaking, however, the stops of the organ form, like the orchestra, a collection of instruments of different tone and effect, but which are all under the control of one performer. There is this further difference also, that while the combinations of instruments in an orchestral composition are fixed beforehand, and are part of the composer's technique, the combinations of stops in the organ may be varied at the will of the performer, either in accordance with a previously considered scheme, or at the impulse of the moment. The organ-player is thus in the position of a conductor of an orchestra who should have the power to call upon any instruments at the moment to perform any particular passages, and who could vary the scoring on different occasions to suit his own taste or his desire to try a special effect. In the organ compositions of Bach and the other old writers for the instrument, no indication whatever is given as to

choice of stops; and Mendelssohn goes no further than to note generally, in the preface to his Organ Sonatas, what degrees of organ *power* he attaches to the directions *f*, *p*, *pp*, &c.: not a word is said as to *tone*. In modern organ compositions it is customary, especially among French composers, to specify the class of stops, and in some cases the special stops, to be used for special passages; but considerable licence must even then be left to the player, since all organs, even of the same size, have not the same stops, and stops of the same name vary a good deal in quality and relative balance of tone in different organs. The constituents of the orchestra are always the same; an orchestra in London is the same as an orchestra in Paris or Vienna, as far as the instruments are concerned, though the style of execution may vary to a certain extent. But an organ is the individual production of an individual builder, who (unless working to a scheme supplied to him) has his own favourite method of laying out the instrument, and his own special quality of tone or "voicing"; it is, in fact, a work of art in itself.

There are, however, certain broad principles and a certain typical arrangement common to all organs, and I propose to give a general description of the instrument and its powers from this central point of view, and avoiding unnecessary technicality, in the hope that such information may awaken in some readers a little more interest in the organ and organ music than at present exists. For, to the general public, the organ is at present even more of a special "mystery" than the orchestra. Most people know what a flute is, or a clarionet, or a trombone; but any one looking for the first time at the stops of an organ sees engraved on them a jargon of unfamiliar names, derived from various languages, which convey no idea whatever to his mind: "Diapason," "Bourdon," "Dulciana," "Spitzflöte," "Mixture," &c., mingled with such familiar names as, "Flute," "Clarionet," and "Trumpet." The polyglot character of the nomenclature arises partly from the fact that some stops have been adopted by English builders

from German practice, and the German name has come over with the stop, as in the case of "Spitzflöte," a stop which was in use for a century or more in German organs before it was introduced into English ones. At the present moment, also, some stops which are known by one name in English organs have different names in French and German organs; in this respect again differing from the instruments of the orchestra, the names of which are practically international. It will be sufficient here to confine ourselves to the nomenclature in use in English organs.

The reader should first, however, understand clearly what the organ is, and on what principle it is constructed. Every one knows that it is played by a keyboard similar to the pianoforte keyboard; but this resemblance to the pianoforte is merely superficial. The keyboard has the same appearance, but its function is quite different in the two instruments. In striking a pianoforte key we impel a hammer, through a delicate connecting mechanism, to strike a string which vibrates; and not only the power of the sound produced, but to some extent even its quality, depends on the manner in which the key is struck, in other words, on the "touch" of the player. In striking or pressing an organ key we open a valve which admits wind, under a regulated pressure, into a pipe containing a column of air which is thrown into vibration by the impact of the wind at the mouth of the pipe. The quality and strength of the sound are absolutely fixed and unalterable, and do not depend in any way on the force with which the key is struck; the production of the sound is entirely mechanical. Furthermore, the sound of the pianoforte wire can only be sustained for a limited time, and is beginning to diminish in force from the instant the key is struck; while the sound of the organ-pipe is maintained at the same power for any length of time that the key is held down. In the pianoforte, also, while the string and the sound-board together tend to prolong the resonance of the note for a moment after the hand is lifted from the key, on the organ

the sound is cut short absolutely the moment the finger leaves the key, having been sustained at its full power up to that moment.

These conditions necessitate, in the first place, a different method of handling the keyboard on the two instruments. In playing a succession of chords on the pianoforte it is generally sufficient to transfer the hand quickly from one position to another, and the slight break in the sound passes over unnoticed. But in playing a succession of chords on the organ such a method would leave short but sharply marked gaps between the chords, and it is necessary to employ a kind of creeping movement of the hand from one chord to another, changing fingers frequently on a key while held down, to get on to the contiguous key without a break in the sound. In playing quick passages, on the other hand (especially in a fugue in quick time), a slightly *staccato* touch is necessary, to ensure the perfectly clean lifting of the finger from one key before the next is struck, otherwise there would be a want of clearness in definition.[1] In the second place it is evident that as we can produce no variation of tone or strength by touch, an organ with one set of pipes only would be a most monotonous and melancholy affair. We must therefore have various ranks of pipes of different tone and strength, to produce the variety requisite to give interest and expression to music. Each such rank of pipes constitutes a "stop," a name apparently derived from the fact that each of them can be shut off or "stopped" at pleasure. An organ with ten stops has therefore ten complete ranks of pipes, or ten pipes to each key, any of which can be placed in or out of connection with the wind-supply by pulling out or shutting in the draw-stop knob marked with the name of the stop. The employment of two, three, or more keyboards is only a further step in the way of readily securing change and contrast of effect. It would be often difficult or impossible to

[1] It is a common idea that a very *legato* touch is *always* requisite in organ playing; but this is a mistake.

change the stops fast enough for a sudden and marked change from *forte* to *piano* or from one class of tone to another. This is got over by having keyboards with different classes of stops, which can be arranged beforehand for the intended effects, and employed as required.

Before describing the varieties of stops and their uses and effects, let us look at the general arrangement of the instrument, and the manner in which the passage of wind to the pipes is controlled. The wind is first pumped by a series of small bellows or "feeders" into the large rectangular bellows called the "reservoir." This is weighted on the top, and the degree to which it is weighted determines the pressure of wind on the pipes.[1] From the bellows the wind passes into the "wind-trunk," a wooden flue of square section, whence it is delivered into the "wind-chest," a long, wide, shallow, air-tight box, lying horizontally, the length and breadth of which depend on the number of pipes which are to stand over it; the number of pipes lengthways depends on the compass of the keyboard, which does not vary much; the number of pipes from front to back depends on the number of stops on the keyboard.[2] Above the wind-chest is another shallow box of the same extent, the "soundboard," divided transversely into narrow, parallel, air-tight compartments, each one of which corresponds to one of the notes represented on the keyboard. The *bottom* of each of these compartments is pierced with one opening for admitting air from the wind-chest, closed by a spring pallet-valve, which is pulled down when the corresponding key on the keyboard is pressed. The *top* of each compartment is pierced with round holes, one beneath the foot of each pipe, for conveying wind to the pipes; each compartment of the soundboard having as many

[1] The pressure of the wind is measured by the extent to which it drives up a column of water in a bent glass tube, and is described according to the displacement of the water in inches. A "3-inch wind" is about the average pressure for the bulk of the organ.

[2] There is a separate wind-trunk and wind-chest for each keyboard, entirely unconnected with each other.

pipes over it as there are stops in the organ. So far, the wind from the soundboard would cause all the pipes of all the stops to sound. But above the soundboard, and close down on it, is another board, the "upper-board," pierced with holes corresponding to those in the upper part of the soundboard. In the holes of the upper-board the feet of the pipes are fixed. Between the upper-board and the soundboard are a series of long thin strips of hard wood, working lengthways in grooves prepared for them; there is one of these to each stop, and these again are pierced with circular holes corresponding with those in the soundboard and upper-board. These slips of wood slide backwards and forwards, and act like the hit-or-miss ventilators commonly used in railway carriages; when the drawstop knob is pulled out by the player the sliding piece is moved so that its holes correspond with those of the soundboard and upper-board, and the wind-way is clear to all the pipes of that stop: when the drawstop is pushed in the slide is moved back so that the holes no longer correspond, and the wind is shut off.

The progress of the wind from the bellows to the pipes is therefore a system of subdivision and distribution.[1] A mass of air under pressure is collected in the reservoir; it proceeds (if there be three keyboards) up three wind-trunks into three wind-chests; from each wind-chest it is admitted into a compartment in the soundboard over which all the pipes speaking the same note are placed, and by the stop-slides it is admitted to or shut out from the pipes belonging to the various stops.

The following diagram will serve to make clear the relation between the keyboard and organ pipes: it is supposed to be the plan of the pipes of one octave of an organ with ten stops.

[1] As Milton has expressed it—

"As from one blast of wind
To many a row of pipes the soundboard breathes."

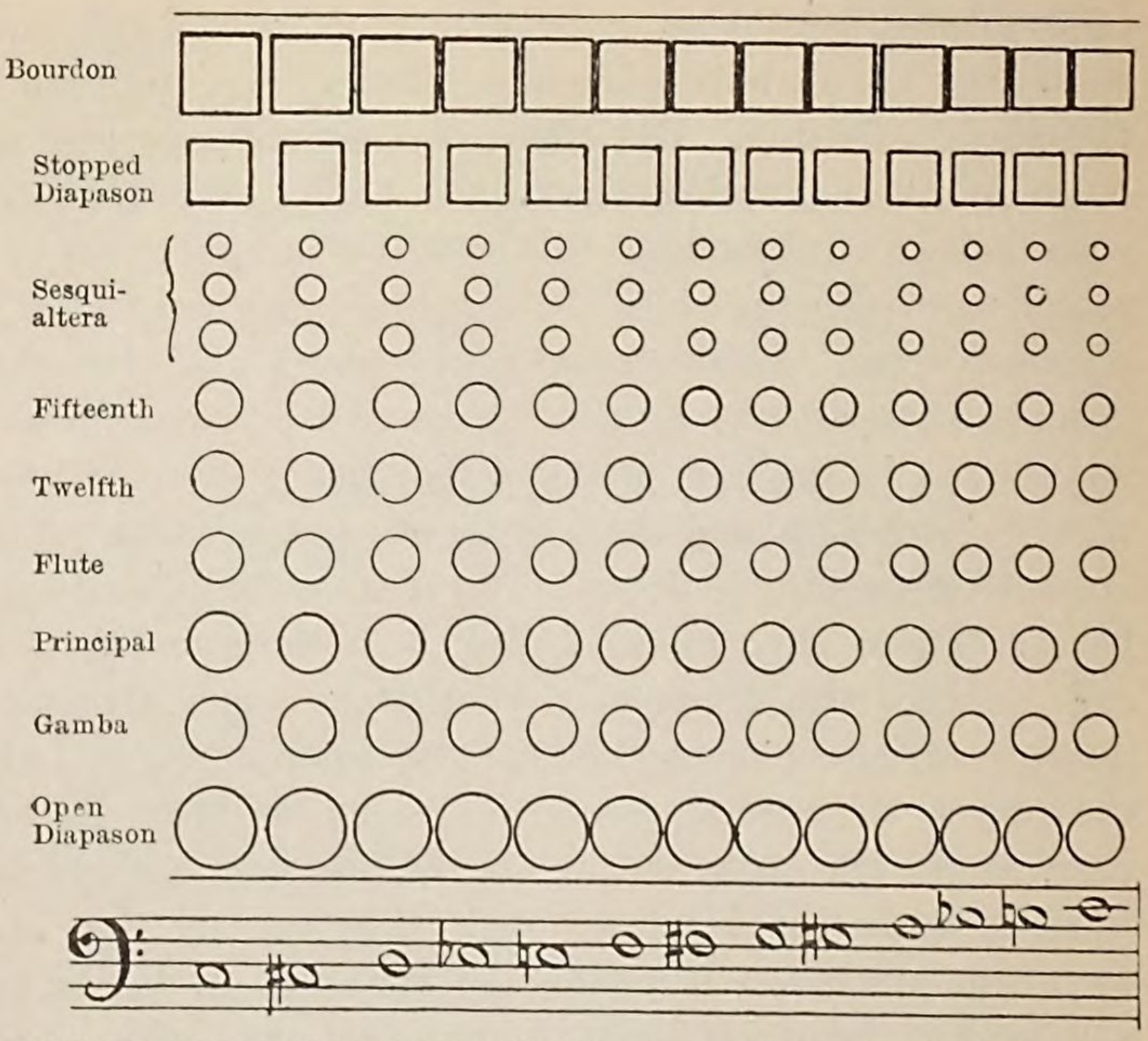


DIAGRAM ILLUSTRATING ARRANGEMENT OF PIPES IN CROSS RANKS IN RELATION TO THE NOTES AND THE STOPS RESPECTIVELY.

Here it will be seen that each rank of pipes *from front to back* represents one note, but each pipe belongs to a different stop and represents a different quality of tone, and all those pipes stand over one chamber of the soundboard. Taking them *from left to right*, every pipe in the row represents a different note and stands over a different chamber of the soundboard; but the whole row belongs to the same stop and represents the same quality of tone, and all stand over the same stop-slide.[1]

The pipes of an organ may be divided into two main

[1] In reality, in an organ of any size, the pipes of the lower notes are placed at opposite ends of the soundboard (C at one end, C sharp at the other end, and so on), and the small ones in the middle, to prevent the large pipes drawing away the wind too much from the small ones. The meaning of the diagram, however, is more readily seen by following the tonal arrangement of the scale, and the principle illustrated is the same in either case.

classes, *flue*-pipes and *reed*-pipes, of which the former are the more numerous and important. The typical form of the flue-pipe is that which is familiar to every one in the pipes which are frequently placed in front of an organ-case as part of the design. The taper foot is not part of the sounding length of the pipe, it is merely made in that shape for the convenience of letting the narrow end into the hole in the upper-board through which the wind is admitted to the pipe. The pipe is almost entirely stopped, just on a level with the lower lip of the mouth, by a plate of metal, bevelled at the outer edge, which leaves only a narrow slit between its edge and the lower lip; through this slit the wind is forced in a thin sheet which impinges against the upper lip, and which is supposed to set up a rapid vibration inwards and outwards which sets the air in the pipe in vibration.[1] The sound is not produced (as is often supposed) by the vibration of the pipe itself, but by the vibration of the column of air within it, and the pitch of the sound produced depends mainly on the length of the speaking portion of the pipe, regardless of the taper foot, which may be any length. The material of the pipe, and the thickness of its sides, produce a certain effect on the quality and strength of tone; a metal pipe produces a much louder and brighter tone than a wood pipe, just as a chorus or a band will produce a louder and more brilliant effect in a hall lined with hard materials than in one lined with wood or hung with upholstery. A thick pipe produces (up to a certain point) a fuller and firmer tone than a thin one, and the saving of material by using thin pipes is a very false economy. Wooden flue-pipes sound on exactly the same principle as metal ones, but are made square in section, for convenience of manufacture, and for the same reason are square at the bottom, a rounded and pierced wood conduit being inserted in the bottom to connect the pipe with the soundboard, instead of the taper foot of the metal pipe.

[1] Organ builders themselves appear to have no clear or precise theory as to the principle on which the sound is started in a flue-pipe.

Flue-pipes may be again subdivided into open and stopped pipes. A pipe stopped at the top sounds an octave lower than the same pipe open. The sound of a stopped pipe is much weaker and more veiled than that of an open one, and the main advantage of stopped pipes (which form only a small proportion of the organ) lies in this very fact, as they add weight and fulness of sound to the whole effect without adding loudness.

In the reed-stops the vibration of the air is excited by a vibrating tongue of metal striking on a metal bed, the end of the tongue being opposed to the current of wind entering the foot of the pipe; the pitch is determined by the length of the vibrating tongue, the free portion of which can be lengthened or shortened (for tuning) by a movable clip. The reed really produces most of the sound, the pipe being added to give volume and resonance to the sound by inciting a column of air to vibrate in response to the reed: the reed alone giving a very harsh and coarse sound.

All the reed-stops may be regarded as more or less imitations of orchestral wind instruments, and are called by names which in themselves imply this: "Trumpet," "Oboe," "Cornopean," "Clarionet," &c. But these, though useful and indeed necessary additions to an organ, do not represent the characteristic and true organ tone. That resides in the flue-stops, which alone have that special quality of tone which is peculiar to the organ, and cannot be imitated by any other instrument or combination of instruments.

The best way to give a general idea of the character and æsthetic value of the principal stops will be to give an imaginary typical list of stops for an organ of three keyboards and of average size. The specification here given, for an organ of fifty stops, really includes all the main classes of stops: organs which run up to eighty or a hundred stops make up the number to a great extent by repetition of stops in duplicate, or of nearly similar quality.

Specification for Organ of 50 stops, with three Manuals and Pedal.

Great Organ.

1. Bourdon . . . . 16-foot tone.
2. Open Diapason . . . . 8-foot.
3. Small Open Diapason . 8-foot.
4. Gamba . . . . . 8 foot.
5. Stopped Diapason. 8-foot tone.
6. Principal . . . . . 4-foot.
7. Flute . . . . . 4-foot.
8. Twelfth
9. Fifteenth . . . . . 2-foot.
10. Sesquialtera (3 ranks)
11. Mixture (3 ranks)
12. Trumpet . . . . . 8-foot.
13. Clarion . . . . . 4-foot.

Swell Organ.

14. Bourdon . . . 16-foot tone.
15. Open Diapason . . . . 8-foot.
16. Stopped Diapason .8-foot tone.
17. Salicional . . . . . 8-foot.
18. Spitzflöte . . . . . 4-foot.
19. Dulciana . . . . . 4-foot.
20. Fifteenth . . . . . 2-foot.
21. Flageolet . . . . . 2-foot.
22. Contra-Oboe . . . . 16-foot.
23. Oboe . . . . . 8-foot.
24. Cornopean . . . . . 8-foot.
25. Clarion . . . . . 4-foot.
26. Vox Humana . . . . 8-foot.

Choir Organ.

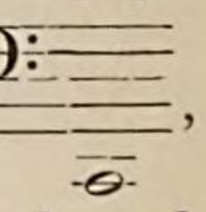
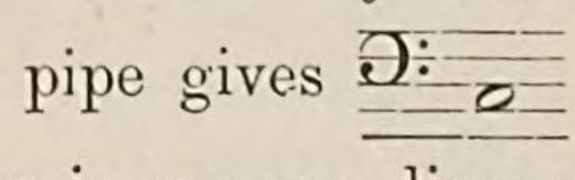
27. Geigen Principal . . . 8-foot.
28. Lieblich Gedact . 8-foot tone.
29. Dulciana . . . . . 8-foot.
30. Vox Angelica . . . . 8-foot.
31. Viol d'Amour . . . . 8-foot.
32. Clarabella . . . . . 8-foot.
33. Harmonic Flute . . . 4-foot.
34. Gemshorn . . . . . 4-foot.
35. Lieblich Gedact . 4-foot tone.
36. Piccolo Harmonique . 2-foot.
37. Corno-di-Bassetto . . 8-foot.
38. Orchestral Oboe . . . 8-foot.

Pedal Organ.

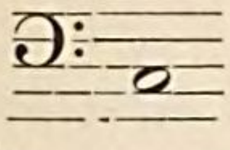
39 Sub-bass . . . . 32-foot tone.
40. Open Diapason . . . 16-foot.
41. Bourdon . . . . 16-foot tone.
42. Violone . . . . . 16-foot.
43. Principal . . . . . 8-foot.
44. Violoncello . . . . . 8-foot.
45. Flute Bass . . . . . 8-foot.
46. Fifteenth . . . . . 4-foot.
47. Mixture (5 ranks)
48. Contra-Fagotto . . . . 16-foot.
49. Trombone . . . . . 16-foot.
50. Posaune . . . . . 8-foot.

This is an organ of three manuals (keyboards played by the hand) and pedal. Of the manuals, the upper keyboard is devoted to the *Swell*, the middle to the *Great*, and the lower to the *Choir*. The Great Organ is the most powerful and important part of the instrument, and the Open Diapasons (Nos. 2 and 3) are the most important stops in the whole organ. They give the body and weight and quality of tone on which all the rest reposes; and if they are poor and thin in tone, the organ is worth very little. The tone of the

Diapasons is full, clear, and bright. The Stopped Diapason is a wooden stop, of pipes half the length of the Open Diapasons, but (being stopped at the top) sounding the same pitch. When used with the open diapasons its soft but broad tone fills in the body of sound and throws a veil over the slight hardness of the sound of the open pipes. The combination of the two makes the typical organ tone. The Gamba is a lighter open stop of a rather thinner and more cutting tone, somewhat violoncello-like in its middle register, which can either be combined with the diapasons or used separately when its special tone is desired.

All these are "eight-foot stops": *i.e.* they are all unison stops which sound the actual note written. An organ pipe about eight feet in speaking length gives the sound  , which is usually the lowest note on the organ manual, and this is a convenient way of indicating the pitch of a stop. A four-foot pipe gives  the octave higher; hence a four-foot stop is one sounding an octave higher than written, a sixteen-foot an octave lower than written; a two-foot, two octaves higher than written. The necessity for having stops which sound otherwise than written arises from that unalterable character of organ sound referred to before. A hard and brilliant touch evokes additional brilliancy from the pianoforte, but avails nothing with the organ, and the addition of any number of unison stops would still leave it heavy in tone. We have to get brilliancy by adding stops of higher pitch. Accordingly the next stop, the Principal,[1] is a four-foot stop, an octave higher than the diapasons, and the Fifteenth is two octaves higher, and between these comes the Twelfth, which sounds, as its name

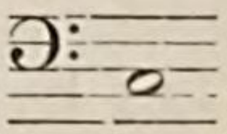
[1] In German organs the name "Principal" is generally given to the Diapasons. The application of the term to the four-foot stop in English organs has this suitability, that it is the stop on which the tuning of the instrument is set out, the other stops being then tuned from it.

implies, the twelfth above the note written, giving  when  is struck. This may be startling to the reader who is unacquainted with the organ, but any one who hears a passage played on the "Full to Fifteenth" (all stops up to the Fifteenth), and the same passage with the Twelfth omitted, will perceive that in the latter case the tone is rather thin and stilted. The Twelfth is of course kept a small and light stop, and is covered by the Fifteenth; it is not really heard, its *effect* is heard. The Sesquialtera and Mixture, which are two names for the same class of stop, go further than this, for they add complete chords, but very high up in the scale, above the Fifteenth. This feature of the organ has been violently assailed by some musicians; Berlioz is exceedingly contemptuous about it; but the test is in the result. Let any one hear a single chord on the Full Organ without the Mixtures, and then with, and he will perceive how much more brightness and vigour is imparted to the general body of tone by the *clang* of the Mixtures. The Trumpet and Clarion are reed-stops which impart the last addition of power to the Full Organ, as the trombones and trumpets do to the orchestra. They should not, however, be so predominant as to give a reedy tone to the full organ, but blend with the general tone.

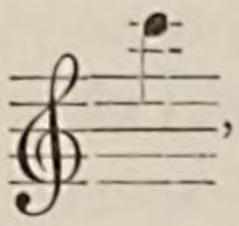
The first-named stop in the Great Organ is a sixteen-foot stopped diapason (Bourdon), which again is necessary to give weight to the total effect of tone. Some builders prefer a sixteen-foot open diapason in an organ of this size, and it certainly gives greater weight and grandeur to the Full Organ,[1] but where there is only one sixteen-foot stop on the Great manual (and an organ of this size will hardly bear more), the Bourdon has the advantage of being more useful in other combinations. In playing passages in pure four-part harmony on the diapasons, for instance, when the

[1] Full Organ means all the stops of the Great Organ.

part-writing is rather extended, the addition of the Bourdon fills in the sound delightfully, whereas a sixteen-foot open diapason would be too heavy.

It will be perceived that when all the stops on the keyboard are drawn, each key represents a group of notes which go to produce the total effect, but which are so balanced that the main tone, answering to the written note, is always predominant. The following diagram shows the notes which would be really sounded on the full Great Organ manual, in the scheme here given, on striking  :—



The open semibreve represents the key struck, the black notes show the number and pitch of the pipes actually sounded when all the stops of the Great Organ are drawn. The notes which are lighter in tone and subordinate are engraved smaller. It will be seen that the actual unison note is much the strongest, having five pipes on it; the octave has three, the rest one each, except that the Mixture overlaps the Sesquialtera, giving two pipes to the  , thus preventing the other notes of the mixtures being too predominant. It should be observed that as we ascend the scale the mixture stops have to break, *i.e.* to begin over again an octave lower, otherwise in the upper octaves of the keyboard they would get too small to be practically made or heard.

The combination of Bourdon and Stopped Diapason, with nothing else, produces a mysterious muffled tone very effective

as a means of special expression. For ordinary playing, however, the Great Organ stops would be used in the following combinations. Small Open Diapason and Stopped Diapason, or Gamba and Stopped Diapason, represent the *p* of the Great Organ. The addition of the Flute to the first combination gives brightness without much increasing power. Stopped Diapason and Flute may be used alone as a light organ, and either of them may be used for solo passages (accompanied on another keyboard), the upper notes of the Stopped Diapason having a distinctly *flute* tone of a quiet and subdued character, like those of the old wooden orchestral flute. The three diapasons together (two open and one stopped) give the *mp* of the Great Organ; the addition of Principal gives the *mf;* the Full to Fifteenth may be called *f.* With the Fifteenth the Bourdon should generally be added to balance it. The Fifteenth may be used without the Twelfth, but the Twelfth of course cannot be used without the Fifteenth to cover it.[1] The next addition would be the Sesquialtera, and the next the Mixture and Trumpet: in most cases the sharper mixture is better not used without the Trumpet, the clang becomes too predominant. The addition of the Clarion, the four-foot reed, gives the last reinforcement of *ff.*

Among special effects, a charming organ for passages of a light violin-like character may be produced by Bourdon, small Open and Stopped Diapason, and Fifteenth. Trumpet and Diapasons may be used together for special passages, with fine effect, and a striking contrast may be produced by alternately using "Full without mixtures" and "Full without reeds," giving a marked contrast of tone. There should always be a Composition Pedal to give both these combinations.[2]

[1] This was what was meant (p. 428) by the remark that some combinations were forbidden, as giving rise to cacophony. For the same reason the Mixtures can *never* be used without all the stops below them, otherwise their discords would become disagreeably prominent.

[2] Composition pedals are explained further on.

We now come to the *Swell Organ*, so called because the pipes are inclosed in a box with Venetian shutters, which can be gradually opened and closed by a pedal operated by the foot of the player, making the sound appear to swell out and diminish, producing *crescendo* and *decrescendo* in fact. This is an English invention, though adopted in modern instruments everywhere now. The flue-stops are much the same as those of the Great Organ, but on a smaller and lighter scale: but there is a much larger proportion of reeds, for as the sounds are partially veiled except when the shutters are wide open, a larger proportion of reed tone can be borne with, and is even necessary to give the full effect of the *crescendo* on opening the swell. Among the flue-stops the Salicional is a very soft reedy-toned stop which, when placed in the swell (it is sometimes put on the Choir Organ), forms the softest *pianissimo* of the organ, so soft that in a large building perfect quiet is necessary to hear it at all; such is the immense range between soft and loud put at the command of the organ-player. Spitzflöte ("spire-flute"—so-called from the tapering shape of the pipe) is a stop of a very sharp and cutting tone, and therefore I put it instead of the ordinary Principal in the swell, as it tells better. The four-foot Dulciana is a very soft, quiet stop, which combines well with any of the eight-foot flue-stops, for a very light organ, and the Flageolet plays the same light part when a quiet two-foot stop is wanted. The Twelfth is often omitted in the swell, as its effect is hardly heard; on the other hand the Fifteenth should be sharp and bright in tone, like the Spitzflöte, to tell in the veiled position in which the pipes are placed in the swell-box.

The stops from 22 to 26 are reeds. The Oboe is a very soft, distant, quiet reed-stop, which may be used entirely alone in passages of slow harmony, though it is more often used in combination with the diapasons. In spite of its name, it has not much resemblance to the orchestral instrument of the same name, and is rather to be regarded as a "mixing-stop" than a solo stop. The Contra-Oboe is the same an

octave lower, and adds great richness to the effect of the Swell Organ. Cornopean and Clarion are brilliant reeds, intended to give power and effect to the full swell, though the Cornopean is often used as a solo stop, in its middle register especially, accompanied on the Great or Choir Organ. The Vox Humana is generally used along with the Tremulant (a contrivance by which a vibratory motion is imparted to the wind in its passage through the wind-trunk) and in this way has an effect which is sometimes startlingly like the human voice; it cannot blend with any other stop, and must be used entirely alone. It is most effective when used as a solo stop in the middle range. In modern French organ music it is much used in passages in which slow harmonies are played on it with the left hand, while the right hand plays twittering accompaniments on the flute stop on another keyboard; a kind of effect which takes the ears of the groundlings, but is quite beneath the dignity of the instrument. In isolated passages the Vox Humana may be used with very expressive effect, but a little of it goes a long way.

The invention of the swell has not been an unmixed good to organ music. It has done much to tempt players away from the higher and nobler forms of organ-music to mere "pretty" effects, and its constant use leads to a very bad style of pedal-playing, as, when the right foot is continually in use on the swell pedal, the left foot is left to hop about on the pedal keyboard in a very hap-hazard fashion. The rendering of the highest class of organ music depends very little on the swell.

The *Choir Organ* seems to have been so called because its light and bright tones form a very good accompaniment to the choir in a cathedral, keeping up the voices without overweighting them. It differs from the Great and Swell Organs in the fact that its stops are not contrived for collective use as a whole so much as for separate use for special effects. Geigen Principal is merely the German name for a small, light,

Open Diapason; Lieblich Gedact is a very soft, delicate stopped diapason. Dulciana may be defined as a very soft, small-scale open diapason, with a very distant and subdued effect; a beautiful stop for slow harmonies *pianissimo*, and also very useful as an accompaniment to a solo stop on another manual. Vox Angelica is a somewhat similar, very soft, open stop tuned a little false, and arranged so as to draw the Dulciana with it; the two sets of pipes, being a little out of tune with each other, produce a wavy sound, or "beat," which is supposed to be angelical. It can be used with effect on occasions, but it is a trick of organ building, hardly worth the name applied to it, and should be employed sparingly. It must be used alone; if combined with other louder stops, it only produces the effect of the organ being out of tune. Viol d'Amour is a stop of the same class as Gamba, a rather soft and reedy-toned open stop; the kind of passages in which it is best used cannot be specified well; it is matter for the æsthetic perception of the player; and if he has not this kind of perception naturally, no teaching will ever give it. Instead of Viol d'Amour, a Bell Gamba may be substituted; this is a still more reedy flue-stop, very effective and beautiful in passages of a suitable class, but less generally useful, because its quality is so marked that it will hardly blend well with other stops. Clarabella is a very sweet-toned, round, liquid type of flute-stop, the most absolute contrast in quality to Viol d'Amour or Gamba. Harmonic flute is the most brilliant Flute stop made; it is an eight-foot stop with a hole pierced in the centre of the speaking length of the pipe, which causes it to sound four-foot pitch; it thus has the fulness and resonance of an eight-foot stop with the pitch of a four-foot one.[1] Gemshorn, which may

[1] Almost all organ builders will put a Harmonic Flute on the Great Organ: a mistake. The Harmonic Flute has a strongly-marked, thick "tooting" tone which renders it quite unfit to combine with the ordinary organ tone of Diapasons, Principal, and Fifteenth. A four-foot Harmonic Flute may be used with good effect *over* the eight-foot Diapasons, where it floats on the top, as it were; but to use it along with the four-foot Principal, as organists will often

also be made as an eight-foot stop, is a stop of thin and cutting tone, of the same class as Spitzflöte, but rather lighter.

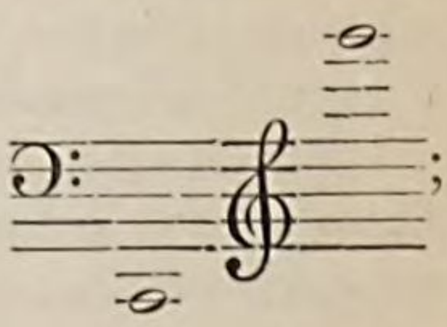
From the Choir Organ as here specified we can get various very effective contrasts of tone. Geigen Principal and Lieblich Gedact (eight-foot) form a kind of softer echo of the Great Organ Open and Stopped Diapasons; Gemshorn added to them gives a light, bright, cutting tone; Viol d'Amour and Gemshorn is still harder and more cutting; Clarabella and Harmonic Flute give a round, sweet, oily tone (the greatest possible contrast to the last named); the two Lieblich Gedacts (eight- and four-foot) form a very soft, delicate flute tone. Corno-di-Bassetto is a reed-stop like a rather broad and mellow-toned clarionet, and can be used either for harmonies or as a solo stop, generally along with Dulciana to give a little more body and continuity to the tone. Orchestral Oboe, when well made, is a remarkably close imitation of the thin, hard tone of the orchestral instrument, useful chiefly as a solo stop. Where there is only one reed on the Choir Organ it is generally a Clarionet, made as like the orchestral clarionet as possible; but where the orchestral oboe can be afforded as well, it is better to have the more mellow tone of the Corno-di-Bassetto as a contrast to it. The Piccolo Flute is useful occasionally for bright effects; and in a rapid figure passage for the right hand (such as may occur, perhaps, in a set of variations), by drawing Clarabella, Harmonic Flute, and Piccolo together, we can get the flute tone in three octaves at once, which is very brilliant and effective.[1] The full Choir Organ can be used at will, but only as a contrast to the

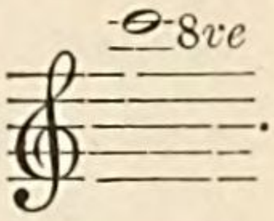
do, shows an extraordinary deficiency in perception of *timbre*. The very sight of the two stops drawn together sets my teeth on edge. Accordingly in this scheme for an organ I have merely inserted "Flute" in the Great Organ. There are various types of non-harmonic flute-stop—*Flute d'amour*, *Flauto traverso*, &c.; but the best type for the Great Organ, if the flute is to be mixed with the other stops, is the old-fashioned *Wald Flute*, with its rather thin and light tone, which organ-builders, however, seem to have almost given up making.

[1] For an example, see Saint-Saëns's "Rhapsodie in E," where this effect of flutes in three octaves is specially marked in an arpeggio figure accompanying a melody on the swell reeds.

full Great Organ, when it produces somewhat the effect of the wood wind band in contrast with the full orchestra.

But the great glory of the instrument is the Pedal Organ, which frees the player's left hand from the bass and leaves it at liberty to fill in the inner parts with greater fulness and variety than would be otherwise possible, and provides a deep and powerful bass, an octave below the manuals, on which the grand and ponderous effect of the organ mainly depends. The reader, however, must not expect to find on any English organ of this size such a collection of pedal stops as is given here. On any German church organ of the same size the Pedal Organ would be on about the scale given in my scheme here, the correct theory being that the Pedal Organ should provide an adequate bass for the manuals; but in England, owing to a wretched system of economy (coupled with the general ignorance of "organ committees"), it has long been the custom to have only two very deep booming sixteen-foot stops on the pedal (Open Diapason and Bourdon), just to give weight, all the rest being got by coupling the pedals to pull down the Great Organ keys. The result is that the Great Organ has no real bass at all except to the Diapasons. Of late one may occasionally find one eight-foot stop and a sixteen-foot reed on the pedal (the latter very rare however), and this does not do away with the necessity for coupling. On the largest class of organs in our town-halls and concert-rooms a fully equipped Pedal Organ will generally be found now; but in the majority of our church organs this wretched system of two or three stops on the pedal is still kept up, and organ committees actually will not believe an organist who tells them that more are required, and only think he is running them into needless expense for a private whim of his own!

The usual compass of the organ manuals is  ;

it used to be only up to the F, and on the other hand is often now made up to the A, and occasionally up to 

.

This higher range is not required for classical organ music, but is sometimes useful for playing arrangements of orchestral music. The written compass of the pedals is now usually  , but it is sometimes carried up to the G, which is often useful.[1] But the whole scale of the pedals is really an octave below the manuals, as the reader will see at once in comparing the stops with those on the Great Organ in the specification. The Sub-bass, which answers to the Bourdon on the Great Organ, is thirty-two feet instead of sixteen, the Diapason is sixteen-foot instead of eight-foot, the Principal eight-foot instead of four-foot; and so on. Thus the short scale of the manual is carried down on the pedal, and with the full number of stops on the pedal no coupling is necessary—a great advantage in the execution of organ music (independently of other considerations), as the left hand in Bach's organ music often crosses the pedal part, or he writes such a passage as this—



in which it is obvious that if the pedal is pulling down also the on the manual, the in the left-hand part is lost, and the flow of the passage interrupted. This kind of difficulty occurs constantly in playing Bach's organ works (and Mendelssohn's also) on an organ where the Pedal has to be coupled to the Great Organ; and "if this should meet the eye" of any churchwardens, clergymen, or organ com-

[1] There is one instance of the high F sharp in Bach's pedal parts, though it may be doubted whether he had a pedal with that note on it. It occurs in the prelude on the chorale "In dulci jubilo."

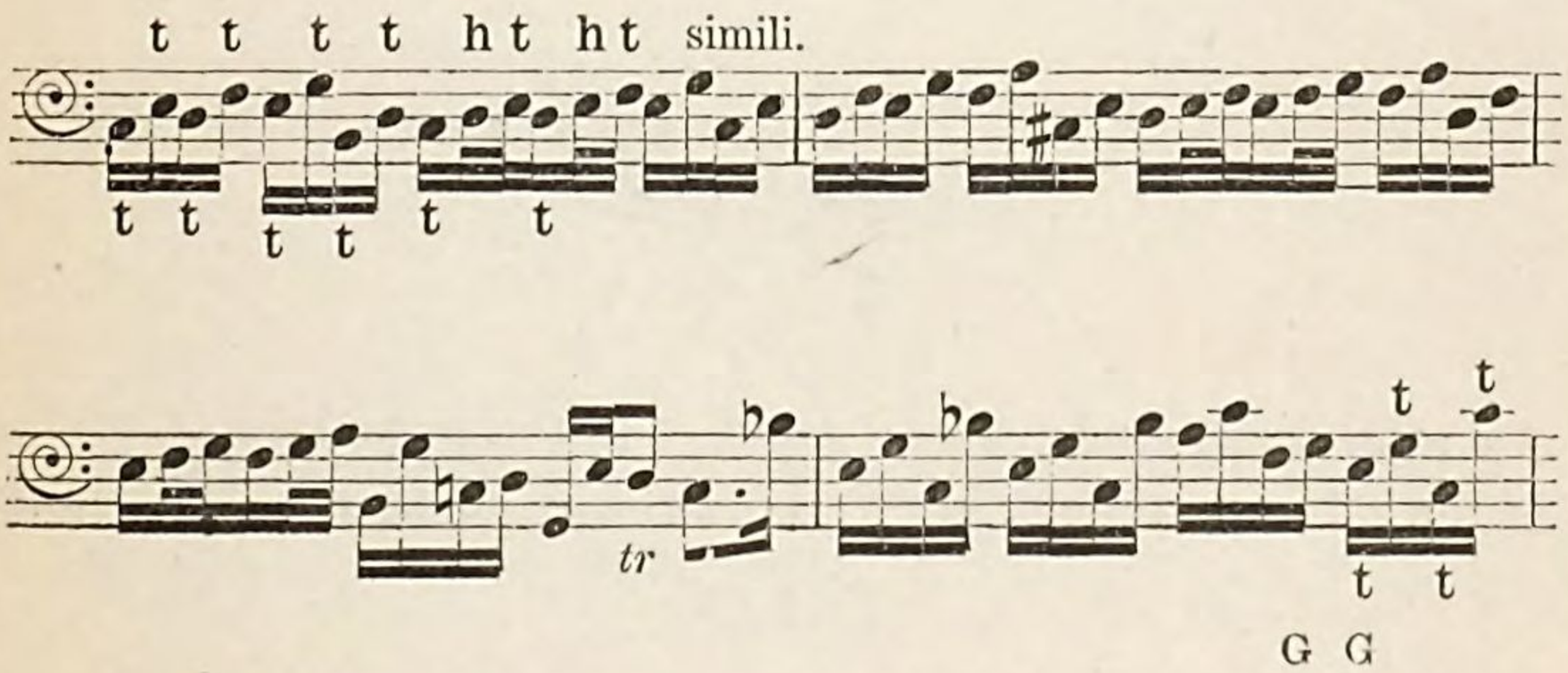
mittees who are prospecting for a new organ, I hope they will suffer a word of exhortation, and arrange for a complete Pedal Organ.

As to the stops on our Pedal Organ, the Violone is a lighter kind of open diapason, answering to the Gamba on the Great Organ; and the Violoncello, an eight-foot stop quieter than the Principal.[1] In this scheme, Bourdon and Flute Bass would form a light bass to the Choir Organ; Violone and Violoncello, a bass to the light part of the Great Organ; Open Diapason, Principal, and Fifteenth, the bass to the stops of the same name on the Great. Mixture is often omitted even on a large Pedal Organ in this country; it has perhaps a bad effect in quick passages, but it is very fine in a slow *canto fermo* on the pedal. Contra-Fagotto is a sixteen-foot reed, somewhat subdued in tone, so as not to assert itself too much; Trombone, a powerful sixteen-foot reed; Posaune, an eight-foot reed of the same class. It is desirable that the three pedal reeds together should have combined power enough to stand out somewhat strongly and definitely, in cases where it is required (as when there is a slow *canto fermo* on the pedal) that the pedal part should be specially emphasized.

The pedal keyboard consists of a set of wooden levers placed on edge; the keys which correspond to the black keys on the manual keyboard being much shorter than the others, and standing higher, and thus affording a guide to the foot when required. No good player ever looks at the pedal keyboard in playing; nothing appears worse or more clumsy than to see a player stooping his head to look under the manual keyboard at his pedals. Passages in which the "black keys" are used are comparatively easy to pick out; to judge distances between the other keys, where none of the short keys occur to guide the foot, requires more practice;

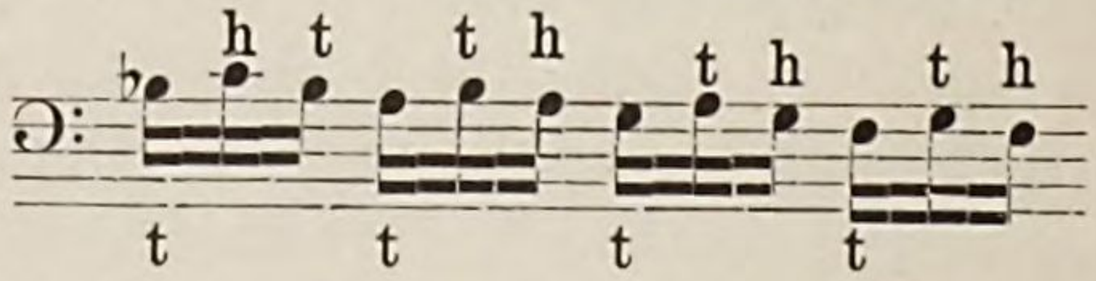
[1] Sub-bass, Bourdon, Violone, and Flute Bass are wooden stops; Open Diapason (on the pedal, never on the manual) is generally made of wood, for economy, but it is far finer and firmer in tone when of metal.

the player must know the intervals intuitively, as a violinist knows them on the string. Not, of course, that the difficulty is anything comparable to the difficulty of learning the violin; in fact, the execution of passages, even of considerable rapidity, on the pedals alone, is much easier than is generally supposed. The difficulty consists in carrying on the pedal part along with that of the two hands; reading an extra set of notes and attending, as it were, to a "third hand," and keeping the feet entirely independent of the hands. The pedals are played either by striking the keys with the toe of each foot alternately, or by combining a heel-and-toe action of either foot with this alternate method. In the early days of organ-playing the alternate toe appears to have been generally used (though there are occasional passages in Bach's organ works in which the heel-and-toe method apparently must have been used), and the German players seem to cling to this method to the present day, possibly because the mechanism of their organs is inferior to that of French and English organs, and the touch consequently heavier. The following passage, part of a pedal solo from one of Bach's compositions, illustrates the kind of show passage which could be executed even on the comparatively clumsy and heavy pedal-boards of Bach's time; the "fingering" (if one may so term it) is marked by the letters *h* and *t* for "heel" and "toe," the right foot being marked above the stave and the left below it:—

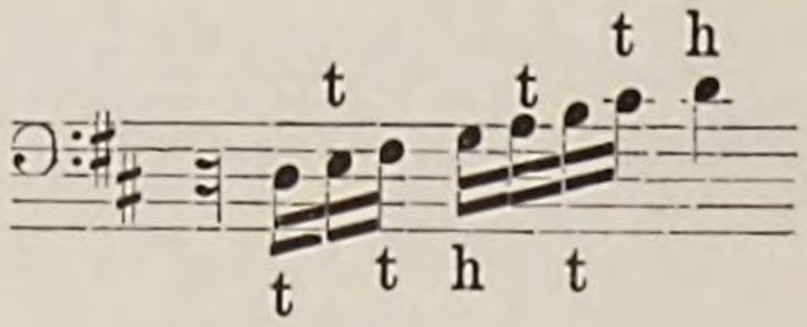




The phrase marked for heel and toe of the right foot, in the first and second bars, would be played so by every English organist now; it is possible, however, that Bach may have played it by crossing the feet. The long descending passage in triplets many modern players would probably take thus:—



This is simpler both to look at and to execute, and on a small and light organ might be preferable, but for a large organ it has not the firmness and evenness of the toe-over-toe method. There is no difficulty in executing a solo passage like this with considerable rapidity, but Bach nearly always kept his quick pedal passages in a more or less *arpeggio* form, which did not demand much crossing of the feet.[1] The rapid and even execution of scale passages is more difficult. In modern playing these are executed by a combination of the two methods; the scale of D, for instance, would be played thus:—



As with the hands, scale practice on the pedals is of the highest importance; but, as before observed, the main

[1] See page 204.

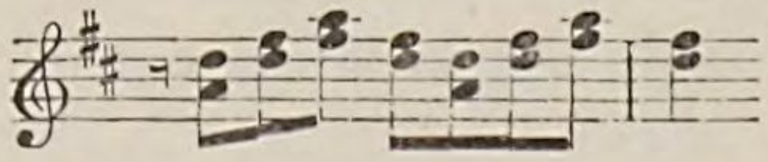
difficulty lies in carrying on the pedal part along with and independently of the hands. The difficulties of pedal-playing were formerly most unnecessarily increased by the curious fact that, in spite of the universal necessity for a pedal-board, there was until lately no recognized scale or make for the pedal keys, so that, as far as pedal-playing was concerned, the unfortunate organist was in the position of a pianist who should be liable to find a piano with a different stretch of octave and a different shape of key in every house he went into! In England this is being put an end to, fortunately, by the general adoption of the shape and scale of pedal keys recommended by the College of Organists, to which every builder of any common-sense is now making his pedal-board, so that this absurdity is in a fair way to be obliterated.

Besides the three manuals and pedal above described, there is now frequently found on large organs a fourth manual, called the Solo Organ, the keyboard for which is generally placed above the Swell Organ keyboard. The object of this, as its name implies, is to collect on one keyboard a certain number of stops of special character to be used for playing melodies, accompanied on another keyboard. This is so useful that it might well be added to an average-sized organ, such as the one specified in this chapter, even when only two or three stops can be afforded for it. As it is, the Choir Organ has also to be used as a solo organ; and if the player had been using a Choir Organ combination of a different kind, and wanted a solo passage on the Orchestral Oboe, he would have to shut in two or three stops and pull out that stop; whereas where there was a separate Solo Organ, the Orchestral Oboe would be placed on that, and could be drawn beforehand to be ready when required. But a more important value in the institution of the Solo Organ arises out of the modern system of constructing powerful reed stops of the Trumpet class, placed upon a very heavy pressure of wind, which is provided for by a special bellows. The solo reed stops, thus powerfully blown and specially voiced for a heavy wind, form a most important

addition to the effects at the command of the player. Their brilliant and powerful sounds, like the blast of a trombone blown *fortissimo*, can be heard above nearly the whole power of the Great Organ, and can thus be used for emphasizing special notes, just as a brass instrument can emphasize them in the orchestra; or they can be used with splendid effect in harmonized passages, in contrast with the ordinary *ff* tones of the Great Organ, like the brass instruments contrasting with the strings in an orchestra. When made by a first-class maker (and they are of little value otherwise) these heavily-blown organ-reeds of the Trumpet class are as bright and brilliant as any orchestral brass instrument, and much firmer in tone,[1] though of course they have not the expression of the tube operated upon by the human lips. As an example of the use that may be made of them in organ music, I may cite the following passage from the *finale* of Mendelssohn's First Organ Sonata, written by the composer thus:—



[1] I remember, at a performance of *Samson* many years ago, with a rather scratch band and a great organ of Willis's behind it, being fairly startled by, as I thought, the extraordinary brilliancy and evenness of the trumpets in the *fanfare* passage at the opening of the first chorus—



A moment after, I perceived that there were no trumpets in the band, and that the organist was playing the passage on the solo reeds. They would have made any average orchestral trumpets sound very small.



With the Solo Organ reeds the long notes at * * may be emphasized thus, the Great Organ part being played on the Full to Mixtures, without reeds—





This produces a very fine and striking effect, giving quite a new point to the passage; and though it may be considered a license to insert the C and D in octaves where Mendelssohn

wrote single notes, it is a license I am certain Mendelssohn would not have objected to.[1]

This effect of the solo reeds on a heavy wind, however, could never have been realized but for a mechanical invention which has exercised a very important influence on modern organ-playing, viz. the pneumatic action, whereby the pressure of the wind pumped in by the bellows is utilized to relieve the player of most of the exertion required to open the valves of the wind-chest. By this invention, as soon as the key is pressed by the player, the wind pressure is brought into action, and the remainder of the work is done by it. Thus the touch of the largest organ is rendered as light as that of a piano. This is a very important aid to playing, for, even apart from the use of stops on a heavy pressure of wind, a large organ on the old system had such a heavy touch that playing on it was a work involving a considerable amount of muscular effort. This partly arose from the resistance and friction of the "movement" between the keyboard and valves, which was formed of long slips of wood called "trackers," which had frequently to change their direction more than once between the key and the valve, the action being connected round angles by levers on the same principle as bell-cranks; but still more from the pressure of the wind against the valve, which has to be pulled down in opposition to the wind-pressure,[2] and the larger the organ the larger the valve. But when we come to pipes placed on a 25-inch wind, instead of the ordinary 3-inch,[3] it would be impossible for the mere force of the finger on the key to open the valve at all; so that here the pneumatic action becomes an absolute necessity. The pressure of the wind has also been utilized, and with success, to supply the whole mechanical connection

[1] It might be done, of course, playing the single notes only on the reeds, but it would not be so effective.

[2] It will readily be understood that it is a necessary principle that the valve should be of a form opening *against* the wind-pressure, in order that the latter may assist in keeping it perfectly tight when closed.

[3] See footnote, page 432.

between the key and the valve; and instead of the system of trackers, we have only a long pipe into which the wind under pressure is admitted on pressing the key, and does all the rest. Electricity has also been used as the power for opening the valves, and will probably come more into use. One great advantage claimed for this latter means of action is that the player may be seated anywhere in the building, and may play at one end of the building and have the organ at the other. The gain from this method is doubtful, however; it does not do for a player to be too far from the instrument; it is an advantage to him to get thirty or forty feet from it, instead of sitting almost in the organ as he generally does; but the pneumatic action can give him this as well as the electric action. The tracker action cannot, because a long action of this kind is rather sluggish, and is much affected by changes of temperature. But for ordinary organs of a moderate size the tracker action, carefully made, is an efficient one, and is still in use for by far the largest number of organs built.

Reference was made in a previous page to "composition pedals." These are pedals to assist the player in changing the stops, by throwing several stops out or in at once. In such an organ as is specified on page 437, for instance, the Great Organ would probably have five composition pedals connected with it—one to throw out stops 3 and 5, the second to add 2 and 6, the third to throw out Full to Fifteenth, the fourth to add the Mixtures, and the fifth the reeds, and (as before remarked) there ought to be a sixth one to throw out the Full Organ *without* the Mixtures, though this is never done unless specially ordered, organ-builders not knowing the value of it. Each composition pedal not only throws *out* all those stops it is specially connected with, but by the same action throws *in* any others that are out. As with the key action, the composition pedals have been greatly improved by the application of pneumatic pressure to their action, and on the same principle small knobs have been placed close to

the keyboard, which, on being pressed by the finger, set in motion a pneumatic lever to change the stops. An old method, which has occasionally been revived in modern organs, was, instead of employing composition pedals to move groups of stops in and out, to employ valves called "ventils" to cut off the wind from groups of stops, the stop-slides and draw-stop knobs remaining unmoved. The advantage of this method is that it is very quiet in action, as there is no extensive mechanical movement of parts (even the modern pneumatic composition action makes considerable noise sometimes); the disadvantage—a rather serious one—is that the position of the draw-stop knobs does not really represent what is on or off, which may lead to mistakes.

Having sketched out the general character and structure of the instrument, we may conclude with a few words as to the æsthetic of organ music. The great glory of the organ consists perhaps in the fact that it alone, among instruments for the production of music, places a great variety of tonal effect and an immense power of sound—an "omnipotence of music," as Schumann called it—under the control of the mind and hands of a single performer: and if there were the same close connection between the nervous temperament of the player and the expression of the instrument as there is, for instance, in the case of the violin, there would be no musical performance by a single player so interesting and so impressive as that on a large organ. Unfortunately, as already pointed out, the purely mechanical method of the production of sound in the organ interposes an impassable barrier between the nervous system of the player and the ultimate result in the sounds produced by his manipulation of the keyboard. He is not producing the notes by his own muscular action, but merely putting machinery in action whereby they are produced; and it is probably this want of direct relation between the executant and the music, this semi-mechanical element in its production, which leads many

to the feeling that the organ is a dull instrument to listen to in comparison with the pianoforte and the violin. On the other hand, the organ has the power, which no other instrument in existence possesses, of sustaining sounds for any length of time with perfectly equable and undiminished volume. This quality of course renders it invaluable for all music which depends largely for its expression on sustained harmonies and suspensions of harmony, the effect of which, it may be said, can be fully realized on no other instrument.

Taking into account these qualities of the organ, it seems evident at once that the true province of such an instrument consists in giving expression to the intellectual rather than to the emotional element in music. It must be remembered also that the power of execution on the instrument is restricted both in regard to the speed and the variety of character of the passages that can be satisfactorily rendered upon it. In respect to variety of character, the pianoforte has a far larger range than the organ, and any one who has had frequently to adapt pianoforte accompaniments "on sight" (as the Americans say) to the organ will have become conscious how cumbersome is the latter instrument by comparison, how stiffly it moves (if it can move at all) through delicacies of figure-writing which can be lightly and unobtrusively touched off on the piano, and how completely the figure of the accompaniment has to be modified at times to render it possible or endurable on the organ. Owing to the precise and mechanical nature of the production of sound on the organ, and its sudden cessation when the finger is lifted from the key, the rapid repetition of chords assumes a character quite different from that of a similar passage with the band or on the pianoforte. To close an organ composition with a succession of rapid repetitions of the tonic chord, *ff*, as is done, for instance, at the close of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, would have an effect absolutely vulgar and revolting to the ear and taste: it would be like a succession of explosions of sound without meaning or justification; since, if it is

desired to end with a great volume of sound, the organ can do this far more grandly and effectually with its one long closing chord, sustained *ad libitum*, while the instruments of the orchestra can only prolong their full volume of sound by means of repeated impulses. In softer passages the same distinction is felt; the organ will not bear treatment by rapidly repeated chords; in such a simple form of pianoforte accompaniment as this, for instance—



the repeated chords in the right hand would be too mechanically prominent, too obtrusive, if played thus on the organ; it would have to be modified thus—



to produce the same repose of effect as on the pianoforte. For similar reasons, *arpeggio* passages which sound quite satisfactory on the piano would be hard, thin, and bald in effect on the organ, unless filled up by accompanying harmonies on another keyboard, or by tying some of the notes of the *arpeggio* "figure" so as to fill it in and give it consistence.

The organ, then, is essentially an instrument for the music of contemplation rather than of emotion—for the ancient style of composition in closely-wrought parts, rather than for the modern style of massed harmonies relieved by decorative

figure-passages. At times, and under certain restrictions, it is capable of passionate expression; it is capable also of piquant effect; but both passion and piquancy are foreign to the true genius of the instrument, as exemplified in the greatest works which have been written for it. These, it is almost needless to say, are the large group of compositions for the instrument left by Bach, of which something has been said in the chapter on that composer. They consist principally of Preludes and Fugues, that being in Bach's day the accepted form for the most serious class of instrumental music. It must not be assumed, however, that the highest æsthetic treatment of the organ can only be realized in fugue composition. The fact that Bach's greatest organ works are fugues has led to a kind of tacit assumption to this effect; but the same artistic quality may be realized in other forms of composition, provided that the style be grave and elevated, and the best capabilities of the instrument kept in view. It has even been questioned by some critics whether the organ is really, as is commonly supposed, the most suitable medium for the utterance of fugue, owing to the difficulty of clearly defining and separating the parts; and possibly some of Bach's lighter and more brilliant organ fugues might be, in certain respects, more effective if scored for an orchestra; while, on the other hand, there are orchestral fugues, such as the *finale* of Mozart's Symphony in C, which certainly could not be effectively given on the organ, owing to their specially brilliant character. Such works, however, as Bach's great Fugue in the Doric mode [1] are entirely unpresentable, in their true effect, upon any instrument except that for which they were written; and with reference even to the lighter and more brilliant ones it must be remembered that there is one source of grand effect in an organ fugue which we can find nowhere else, viz. the immense weight and power of the pedal organ. The manner in which, on a large organ with an adequate pedal, the subject in the bass comes thundering

[1] See pages 47 and 187.

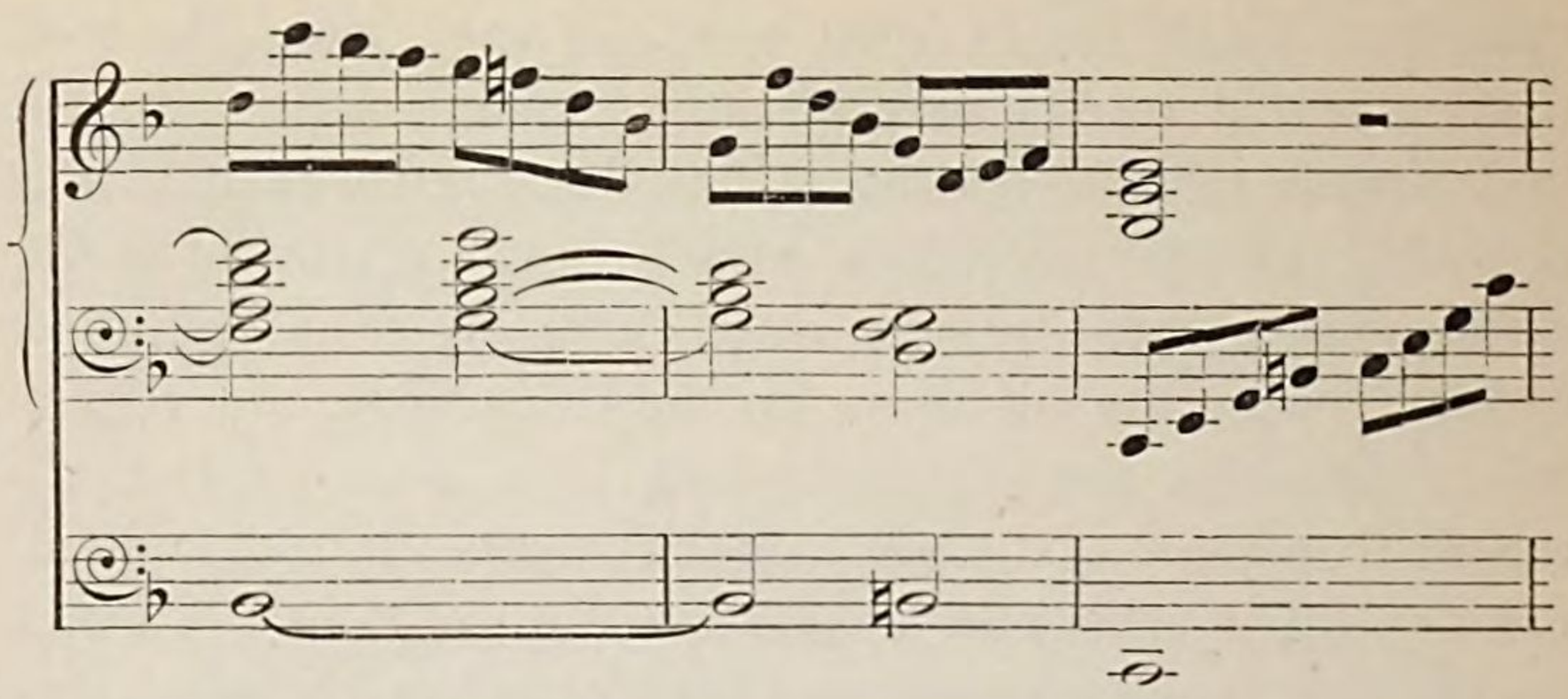
in, forms the grandest effect to be had in fugal music, and such as nothing but the organ can supply.

The same dignity and severity of style should be preserved in lesser and quieter compositions for the organ as in those grander and more serious works of which Bach's Toccatas and Fugues are the highest examples. In much modern organ music we find a mere melodial treatment of the instrument; a melody to be played on one keyboard with a "tum-tum" accompaniment on another, like a popular ballad turned into a "song without words." Such a procedure is quite unworthy of the dignity of the instrument. Bach and his compeers wrote pieces with separate melodies (*chorale* melodies generally) for a separate keyboard, but the accompaniment is always polyphonic in character. This was to be expected at that period; but it is the same with Mendelssohn (the only eminent modern composer who fully understood the organ), who has introduced some beautiful accompanied melodies, "songs without words," in his Organ Sonatas, but never descends to a "tum-tum" accompaniment; the accompaniment always has a contrapuntal design.

Regarding the organ as a solo instrument for the performance of music specially written for it, the lament of the organ-player is that the *répertoire* of organ music of the highest class is so very restricted. With the exception of Mozart's two remarkable Fantasias (mentioned on another page), the only great composers besides Bach who have written anything for the organ are Handel and Mendelssohn. Handel's Organ Concertos, however, are only partially satisfactory; they were written for the small English organ (without pedals) of his day. They are for the most part rather in the harpsichord than the organ style, and though they can be made effective on a large organ, and are always pleasant to listen to, only one or two movements from them represent his best work. Mendelssohn's contributions consist of a set of six Sonatas, and three Preludes and Fugues, which do not take one very far; though these, the Sonatas espe-

cially, are admirable in their way, and are among the most really original things that Mendelssohn has left. In the first Sonata, in F minor, he achieved the remarkable feat of inventing two perfectly new effects in the treatment of the instrument, without in the least departing from its proper capabilities. One of these is the *Intermezzo* movement which precedes the *Finale*, which is a kind of dramatic recitative, a piece of declamation, but treated in a polyphonic manner. The other new treatment is in the *Finale*, in which for the first time there was an attempt made to impart to an organ *finale* something of the brilliancy and fire of some of Beethoven's pianoforte *finales*, but in such a manner as to bring it within the proper capacity of the organ, and to realize an effect which could be obtained on no other instrument. Mendelssohn's device here was the use of *closed arpeggios*, as illustrated in the following quotation from the commencement of the movement :—





In the first, third, and fifth bars, it will be seen, each note of the *arpeggio* of the chord is held after being struck, a device which, on a large organ (where each key that is struck means some twenty pipes added to the volume of sound), produces a series of tumultuous *crescendos*, like a succession of great billows of sound surging past. In the middle of the composition a melodic subject is combined with this closed *arpeggio* figure. The whole movement is full of genius, and is one of the composer's happiest inspirations, though (being only "organ music") it is probably quite unknown even to that remnant of Mendelssohn-worshippers who are still to be found embedded in the fossiliferous strata of Cathedral cities.

But beyond these compositions of Mendelssohn's we may look in vain for any modern organ music of the highest class and bearing the stamp of original genius. The Germans have the credit of having always maintained the serious character of organ music; they have never degraded the noble instrument to the utterance of popular frivolities and prettinesses; but alas! their modern organ music has the equally fatal fault of being for the most part hopelessly dull. The compositions of the Merkels and Hesses, and their compeers, present a Dead Sea of mediocrity, amid which one dull and heavy composition can hardly be distinguished from another. Van Eyken has produced one sonata with a fine first movement in the manner of Mendelssohn; and a couple of striking

but rugged sonatas by Ritter, and one or two by Rheinberger, detach themselves from the mass of serious platitudes. Modern English organ music is more graceful, more tuneful, but quite as mediocre as modern German. The late Henry Smart was a prolific and prominent writer for the instrument; but when you have heard one, or at most two of his pieces, you have heard all he has to say. The French organ composers have sinned vilely against good taste; their popular organ music, by such composers as Batiste and his clan, is only fit to be played at a wild beast show; nationally, the French have no taste for, or sympathy with, the finer qualities of the organ, and even their best organ composers have descended deep into the valley of the shadow of kickshaws. But there is this to be said for them—that at their worst they are not absolutely dull, and at their best they are original, interesting, and graceful; and it is to MM. Saint-Saëns, Widor, Salomé, Guilmant, and one or two other Frenchmen, that we must at present look for anything like life in modern organ music, though in a style far inferior to what the dignity and prestige of the instrument demand. Could such a composer as Brahms have been induced to give some of his attention to the grand neglected instrument, there might have been a different tale to tell.

It is no doubt partly owing to this scarcity of music written for the organ that the practice has been largely adopted of playing on the organ arrangements of music written for the orchestra or for other instruments. Where the music selected is such as is suitable to the genius of the instrument, this is not necessarily to be condemned; indeed, it may be a very interesting æsthetic study. I do not know that I ever heard a more interesting or remarkable organ performance than when I once heard Mr. Best supply the place of the band in accompanying *The Messiah* on the great organ at Liverpool, reproducing every detail of the instrumental scoring, and even suppressing some of the heavier diapason stops on the pedal organ, and keeping to the violone tone, in order to

impart a more orchestral effect to the whole—a refinement of æsthetic which possibly not half-a-dozen of the audience would be aware of. Orchestral music necessarily loses effect when scored for the organ; it is only worth doing as a *pis aller*, when no orchestra is to be had; but other classes of music may gain a new and fuller expression. Take as an example the Funeral March of Beethoven's A flat Sonata, the form of which obviously suggests an open-air "wind" band. The organ can come far closer to this ideal; can give the variety and contrast of *timbre*, which can only be imagined on the pianoforte; and can give vastly greater scale and grandeur to the *crescendo* and *fortissimo* passages. In such a case it is worth while sometimes to try such an experiment. But nothing can be more contemptible than the system, which many English organists indulge in, of playing on the organ operatic overtures, marches, and in fact anything (it would seem) rather than organ music.[1] A more respectable kind of heresy is that of playing Handel's choruses as organ pieces, which used to be constantly done in churches. Occasionally a fine vocal fugue makes a fine organ fugue, but, as a rule, what is written as a vocal composition sounds dull and heavy as an instrumental one. The lowest deep that can be descended to in this way is to play the "Hallelujah Chorus" on the organ, where the choral ejaculations of "Hallelujah" become a series

[1] As an example of our public taste in these matters, I cut from the *Times* the programme of the music performed by a well-known organist on the occasion, a few months ago, of a large reception given by a very eminent judge, who is supposed to be a connoisseur in music, and who (according to the newspaper report) himself selected the following list of pieces:—Handel's overture to *Samson;* Mozart's "Rex tremendæ Majestatis," "Recordare," and "Benedictus"; Bennett's Barcarole; Cherubini's "Ave Maria"; Mozart's overture to *Titus;* Haydn's "Hymn to the Emperor" (varied); Bach and Gounod's "Meditation"; Handel's overture to *Acis;* Mozart's "Placido"; and Handel's chorus, "From the Censer." Not a note of organ music in the whole programme! unless Gounod's "transcription" of one of Bach's clavier preludes could by courtesy be called so. And this was not to please the popular ear (which might be excusable), but for the benefit of what ought to have been, one would suppose, an exceptionally cultivated audience.

of barks, utterly without meaning. A man who is known to have done that should be avoided.

The combination of the organ with other instruments is a matter of some difficulty. The instrument is too large and elaborate in itself, and too strongly individualized in its quality of tone, for satisfactory employment in a concerto with orchestral accompaniments. This might have done for the small light English organs of Handel's day, but on a modern large organ Handel's concertos are more effective and more satisfactory when treated entirely as organ compositions, with the orchestral *tutti* passages arranged for the organ; the character of both being nearly similar. It is impossible to treat a large organ as a solo instrument contrasted with a full orchestra; the two merely become two orchestras of equal power but totally different character and quality, and the probable result is that the organ, with its greater weight and persistence of tone, swamps the orchestra. Any attempt to combine the two must be made on a different system from the old method of concerto writing. M. Widor has made some interesting attempts at combined Symphonies for organ and orchestra. The only one which I have heard was certainly not a success in performance, but it was in the Albert Hall, which is a large and unwieldy space for such an experiment: with an organ and hall of more manageable size the result might have been better. The introduction of the organ at the close of Sir A. Sullivan's *In Memoriam* overture has a grand effect, and suggests the use which might be made of the instrument in giving greater power and grandeur to the climax of an orchestral composition; but in such a case the introduction of the organ must be specially contemplated and considered in the style and arrangement of the composition. In effects of a quieter and more subdued character the organ may be combined very effectively with the violin or the pianoforte; and there is plenty of room for new experiments in this direction.

It has long been recognized in England, though only

recently in Germany, that the organ can add a great deal to the effect of oratorio music, as a power at the back of the chorus and band, employed where desirable to reinforce the total effect. In England the old custom was that the organ should be played all through an oratorio, softly in the solos and louder in the choruses, as a kind of background to the band and chorus. Mendelssohn was probably the first to suggest a more excellent way of introducing the organ so as to give special emphasis to special passages, and to bring in its grave tones where they would produce the most effect. In both his oratorios he wrote directions for the introduction of the organ at special passages; and this is the system now generally followed. Treated on this system, a large organ possesses an immense power over the musical colouring of a choral and orchestral work; a power which must be wielded with insight and judgment. The full weight of the organ, introduced at the culminating point of a great chorus, may add incalculably to the sublimity of its expression; while a single deep pedal note, sounded once, perhaps, in the accompaniment to an air, may impart a musical colouring of the highest importance in aiding the expression of the words.[1]

In the main, however, it is probable that the organ will retain its unique position as an instrument of great power and grandeur, but of a strongly marked individuality of tone and character; an autocrat in its own realm, sufficient unto itself, and intolerant of any relation, on terms of equality, with other musical powers. Somewhat restricted in its range

[1] On the other hand, nothing can be more offensive than the sudden and violent intrusion of the organ where its entry can have no point or æsthetic meaning, save to produce a "crash" at the close of a movement. As a flagrant instance of this form of musical vulgarity, I remember, at a performance of *The Messiah* at the Albert Hall, the organist (one who ought to have known better) allowing the band to play the symphony at the close of "O Thou that tellest" undisturbed, until the last six notes of the final phrase, when he suddenly jumped on the organ—no other expression would do justice to it—with six full chords in both hands, *fortissimo è staccato*. As a friend who was with me observed, "It was almost indecent."

of expression, it enjoys at least this proud privilege—that what is most serious and abstract in music is the best suited to its capabilities, what is frivolous and superficial the most at variance with them ; and the more the public mind is educated up to the loftier utterances of music, the more will the organ be appreciated, and the more will its misuse for the execution of popular trivialities be deprecated. What is wanted now (though it is to be feared there is little chance of our obtaining it) is that a composer of a high order of genius should devote himself to the instrument, and should do for modern organ music what Beethoven did for modern pianoforte music.

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INDEX.

Acis, 149
Agrippina, 116
Albrechtsberger, 254, 268
Alceste, 365
Alexander's Feast, 125 ; drinking chorus from, 148
Almira, 115, 116
Anthems : Handel's, 121, 129 ; Purcell's, 129
Architecture compared with Music, 3, 4, 6, 12, 13
Aria (in Bach's day), 164
Ariosti, 122
Arnold, Matthew : on fame, 155 ; on words and music, 380 ; *Tristram and Iseult*, 383, 409
Arrangements : of Bach's organ works for piano, 178–9 ; of orchestral music &c. for organ, 464
Athaliah, 149
Athenæum, compares Mozart to Moore, 252
"Aus tiefer Noth," Bach's prelude on, 13

B minor Mass, Bach's, 210, 211
Bach, Ambrosius, 162
Bach, A. W., 159
Bach, Caspar, 160
Bach, Christoph, his influence on music, 166
Bach, Hans, 160
Bach, Johann, 160
BACH, JOHANN SEBASTIAN, 154 ; ancestry, &c., 159–162 ; early studies, 163–4 ; as an organ composer, 165-6 ; at Arnstadt, 170 ; as a church organist, 170–1 ; technical knowledge of the organ, 173 ; his chorale preludes, 175–6 ; executive power on the organ, 176 ; organ compositions, 178–203 ; his manner of playing them, 204 ; *Wohltemperirte Klavier*, 205–209 ; choral works, 209–212 ; vocal solos, 212-214 ; compared with Handel, 214–216
Bach, Veit, 159, 162, 214
Balfe, 416
Bass drum, 98
Bassoon, 96 ; in *The Sorcerer*, 102
Beard, 126
Beat, 17
BEETHOVEN, modern critical opinion on, 262 ; his position and aim in instrumental music, 263–4 ; early life, 264–5 ; power of extemporising, 266–7 ; personal characteristics, 267–8, 301–4 ; as a student, 268–270 ; first appearance as a composer, 270 ; as a player, 271 ; successive styles, 271–3 ; *Eroica* Symphony, 273–77 ; "the rift within the lute," 275 ; Fourth and Fifth Symphonies, 277–280 ; Pastoral Symphony, 280–84, 19, 106 ; musical punning, 280 ; another "little rift," 281 ; Seventh Symphony, 284–5, 260, 380, 397 ; *allegretto* from, analysed, 76–84 ; Eighth Symphony, 285–6 ; Ninth Symphony, 286 ; introductory phrase a mistake, 287 ; finale, 289–93 ; its false æsthetic, 291 ; his use of the orchestra, 293–5 ; pianoforte compositions, 295–8 ; ideas on pianoforte technique, 299, 300 ; style of letters, 304 ; his religion, 305–6 ; opinions on other composers, 306–7 ; nature of his genius, 307–8 ; careful elaboration of his compositions, 309 ; extent of "poetic basis" element in his music, 309–310 ; no "progress"

theory recognisable in his works, 310–12 ; his admirers unable to write him down, 312 ; his moral aspect, 313
BENNETT, STERNDALE, 414 ; not a composer of the first order, 416–17 ; characteristics of his genius, 418–20 ; his pianoforte music, 420, 421 ; vocal compositions, 421–3 ; adherence to Day's theory, 423–4 ; artistic sensitiveness, 425 ; his pure classic taste, 426 ; his comment on Mozart's music, 219
Best, W. T., use of Glockenspiel stop on organ, 173 ; playing of Bach's Fantasia in G, 196 ; of Mozart's in F minor, 258 ; of accompaniments to *Messiah*, 463
Bononcini, 114, 118, 122
Brahms, 463
Browning, *Pictor Ignotus*, 46 ; *Master Hugues*, 188 ; *Abt Vogler*, 189, 395 ; *Andrea del Sarto*, 218, 229, 260 ; *Filippo Lippi*, 256 ; *Sordello*, 276, 407–8
Burney : traits of Handel, 127 ; comment on Purcell, 129 ; notes of his tour abroad, 220–21
Buxtehude, 167–8

Cadenza, 300
Cathedral music, English, 415–16
Charlatanism in Art, 401–2
Cherubini, 307
CHOPIN, 329 ; essentially a pianoforte composer, 330 ; personal refinement of character, 331 ; his preparation for a concert, 332 ; opinion on Thalberg, 333 ; personal and artistic traits, 333–35 ; relations with George Sand, 336–7 ; artistic treatment of the piano, 337–345 ; *Nocturnes*, 344 ; aristocratic tone of his music, 344–5 ; *Polonaises*, 346–9 ; compared with Liszt and Schubert, 358
Chorale, German, 168 ; "Vater Unser," 169 ; Bach's preludes on, 175–6.
Chords, consonant, 30, 31 ; of poetic significance, 84
Chorley, criticism on *Mount of Olives*, 306 ; on Liszt as a pianist, 350
Clarionet, 96, 102
Coda, 73–76
Colour, analogy with *timbre*, 41, 94
Concerto, as a form of composition, 104, 105 ; Beethoven's, for violin, 105, 309 ; Handel's, for organ, 125, 132, 460, 465 ; Beethoven's, for piano in C, 270–71 ; in C minor, 299–300 ; Liszt's, for piano, 354
Cornelius March, 75
Counterpoint, early vocal form of, 42, 46 ; adopted in instrumental composition, 46, 48
Crescendo, a novelty to Burney, 221 ; Wagner's and Rossini's, compared, 408
Crotch, Dr., 221
Cuzzoni, 123, 124
Cymbals, 98 ; in the organ, 173
Czerny, recollections of Beethoven, 268, 299

D'Agoult, Countess of, and Liszt, 356–7
Dance forms, music founded on, 48
Day's theory, 31, 291, 424
De Musset, on Don Juan, 238–9
Dettingen Te Deum, 134
Dictionary of Music, Grove's, 96, 264, 314, 316, 329, 424
Discords, of two classes, 32, 33 ; preparation and resolution of, 34 ; use of, in composition, 34–36 ; discord a passage to a point of rest, 37–39 ; in Finale of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, 290
Don Giovanni, 2, 237–40, 241–4 ; Gounod's estimate of, 243
Doric mode, 187 ; Bach's fugue in, 47, 187, 200
Double basses, 95, 96 ; pizzicato of, 101
Drama, Musical, as distinguished from Lyrical, 368 ; its inconsistency, 379–382 ; essentially illogical, 411

Early English school of music, 415
Esther, 121
Extempore playing, 227–8
Extension and proportion in time, 41
Extension in space and time compared, 6, 7

Fantasia, Bach's, in G, 195–6 ; Mozart's, in C minor, 231 ; in F minor, 257–8
Farinelli, 124
Faustina, 124
Field, 344
Figure passages, 89–92
Fliegende Holländer, 374
Flute, 96, 101
Forkel's *Life of Bach*, 156
Form, importance of, 11, 13, 85 ; of Mozart's minuet, 55 ; of his Symphony in G minor, 56–71 ; of Beet-

hoven's *allegretto* from Seventh Symphony, 76–84
Fugue, 46–48, 182; Handel's, in E minor, 132; organ fugues on piano, 178–9; themes of Bach's organ fugues, 181; Bach's, in E minor, 182–3; St. Ann's, 183, 192; D minor, 183; C minor, 184; D major, 185; 201–3; "little" G minor, 185; B minor, 186; Doric, 47, 187, 459; G major (vol. iv.), prelude to, 190; G major (vol. ii.), 194; "little" E minor, prelude to, 193, 194–5; klavier fugue in C♯ minor, 208–9; Mozart's extempore, 226–7; his fugue in Symphony in C, 459; in Fantasia in F, 258; in Beethoven's Op. 59 quartett, 48; in his *Missa Solennis*, 308; in his B flat Sonata, 308
Funeral March, Beethoven's Eroica, 276; in A flat Sonata, 74, 88, 464; Chopin's, 348; in *Siegfried*, 406

Gadsby, H., overture by, 398
Garcia, Madame Viardot, 147
Gelinek, Abbé, 266
Gibbons, Orlando, 130
Glockenspiel (in the organ), 173
Gluck, opinions on opera, 365–6; treatment of opera, 366–7; compared with Wagner, 403–4
Goethe, and Beethoven, 303; on opera, 364
Götterdämmerung, 410
Gounod, estimate of *Don Giovanni*, 243
Graun, theme from *Der Tod Jesu*, 267
Greek tone-interval, influence of, 17; inconvenience in harmony, 18
Grimm, his opinion of Mozart, 253
Grove, Sir G., on Beethoven, 307–8, 327; on Schubert, 316–17, 319, 320, 321, 322, 325, 327
Guilmant, 463

Hallelujah Chorus, 144; faulty singing of, 145–6; on the organ, 464
HANDEL, 112; character as a child, 113; early career, 114–117; his dry humour, 115; at Venice, 116; at Hanover, 117; career in England, 119–126; personal character, 127–8; as an opera composer, 119, 136–7; as an instrumental composer, 132–3; as an oratorio composer, 137–150; his plagiarisms, 133–136; not "a second-rate composer," 150–153; Beethoven's estimate of him, 152–3
Harmonic Flute (organ), 444
Hawkins, recollections of Handel, 117
Haydn, develops sonata-form, 50; as to wind instruments, 220; method of composing, 229; on Mozart's playing, 231
Haymarket Opera House, 117, 118, 121
Heidegger, 118, 119
Heine, on "the German German," 259; friendship with Chopin, 336
Hercules, 149
"High" and "Low" tones, 7–8
Hill, Aaron, 119
Holmes's *Life of Mozart*, 224, 236, 246
Hüffer, Franz, on Wagner, 382, 400; *Music of the Future*, 392–3
Hullah, criticism on Marcello, 405
"Hundredth Psalm," interludes in, by an organist, 172

Idomeneo, 235–6
Il Seraglio, 234–5
Imitation, 270
Intervals, consonant, 30, 31
Iphigenia in Tauris, 367, 404
Israel in Egypt, 125, 134, 148

Jahn's *Life of Mozart*, 219, 224, 231
Jephtha, 149
Joshua, 149
Judas Maccabæus, 149

Keiser, 114
Kelly, recollections of Mozart, 236, 254
Kettledrums, 97; Beethoven's use of, 103; in Mozart's *Requiem*, 251
Key, development of, 20, 21
Krebs, prelude on "O Ewigkeit," 169

La Finta Semplice, 233
L'Allegro, 149
Legend of St. Elizabeth, 354
Leitmotifs, in *Ring des Nibelungen*, 406–7; in *Parsifal*, 411
Lenz, *Beethoven et ses Trois Styles*, 297
LISZT, opinions on Schubert, 323; on Chopin, 331, 338–9; as a pianoforte executant, 350–2; as a composer, 352; the "Ordre Omnitonique," 353; metamorphosis of themes, 354; ugliness of some of his compositions, 355; his phenomenal character, 355–6; relations with Countess D'Agoult, 356–7
Lohengrin, 36, 363, 375
Love's Triumph, a pastoral, 118
Lucrezia Floriani, 333, 336, 337

Major Triad or "Common Chord," 25, 26 ; importance of, 28, 29 ; necessary close to a composition, 36
Marcello, 405
Matheson, 114
May Queen, 418, 422
Melody, defined, 8 ; examples of, 9 ; importance of, 10, 11 ; in relation to harmony, 30 ; Wagner's idea of, 373-4, 379
Melting-pot, Handel's, 135
Mendelssohn, deficiency of creative power in melody, 11 ; coda in *Wedding March*, 76 ; use of oboe, 102 ; organ sonatas, 169, 452–3, 460–2 ; edition of Bach's Chorale Preludes, 175 ; remarks on Bach's *Toccata* in F, 199 : *Meerstille* overture, 398 ; his use of organ in oratorio, 466
Messiah, 126, 133, 139–145, 148
Metamorphosis of themes, 88, 354
Meyerbeer, 307 ; imitated by Wagner, 369 ; hated by him, 370
Mill, J. S., contrasts Mozart with Rossini, 233
Milton, on fugue-playing, 186 ; "inexpressive notes," 188 ; on the organ, 433
Minuet, Mozart's, in D, 51–3 ; analysed, 54–5
Missa Papæ Marcelli, quotation from, 43–45
Missa Solennis, Beethoven's, 308
Mixture stops (organ), 439
Monday Popular Concerts, 104, 178–9
Moscheles, 333, 343
Motetts, Bach's, 210, 222
Mount of Olives, 305
Movement, 71 ; arrangement of, in symphony and sonata, 86–7 ; relation of movements to each other, 87–88
Mozart, historical position in the art, 217–18 ; instrumental music before his time, 220–21 ; precocity, 221, 223 ; character as a child, 223–4 ; his extempore playing, 226–8 ; abstract character of his instrumental music, 228–231 ; dramatic character of his operatic music, 232–3 ; use of the orchestra, 233–4 ; his remarks on the æsthetic of opera, 234–5 ; rehearsal of *Figaro*, 236 ; a master of comedy, 237 ; *Don Giovanni*, 237–240, 241–244 ; *Die Zauberflöte*, 240–1 ; history of his *Requiem*, 244–9 ; *Requiem* critically considered, 249–52 ; absurd opinions about Mozart, 252 ; character as a man, 253–5 ; general culture, 255–6 ; pianoforte music, 256–7 ; organ fantasias, 257–8, and 177 ; general estimate of his genius, 258–261 ; claimed as an ally of Wagner, 367
Mozart, Leopold, 224–5
Mozart's Minuet in D analysed, 51–5
Mozart's Symphony in G minor analysed, 56–71
Mucius Scævola, 122

National Dictionary of Biography, criticism on Handel in, 150–3
Niclas, Madame, 230
Nicolini, satiric verses on, 123
Nocturnes, Chopin's, 344–5
Nohl's *Life of Mozart*, 224, 241, 252 ; absurdities in translation of, 244 ; his book on Beethoven, 301
Notation, discrepancy between written and actual sounds, 23–24
Nozze de Figaro, 236–7

Oboe, 95, 96, 102
Octave, 19, 20
Oper und Drama, Wagner's, 368
Opera, as a form of Art, 363–8 ; Handel's, 136–7 ; modern French, 369
Oratorio, 137–8 ; use of organ in, 466
Orchestra, 93–95 ; under Beethoven, 293–5 ; combined with organ, 465
Orchestral effects and colouring, 98–103
Orchestral instruments, 96–98
Orfeo, 403–4
Organ, about the, 428 ; compared with orchestra, 428–9 ; peculiar nomenclature, 429–430 ; compared with pianoforte, 430–1 ; general construction, 432–4 ; classes of pipes, 434–6 ; specification of stops, 434–7 ; great organ stops, 437–41 ; swell organ, 442–3 ; choir organ, 443–6 ; pedal organ, 446–48 ; pedal playing, 448–51 ; solo organ, 451–4 ; pneumatic action, 454 ; composition pedals, 455–6 ; æsthetic considerations, 456–8 ; true style of organ music, 458–60 ; Mendelssohn's novel treatment of, 461–2 ; modern music for, 462–3 ; arrangements for, 463–4 ; combination with other instruments, 465 ; in oratorio, 466
Organ, Handel's style of preluding on, 133
Organ-playing in an empty building, 189
Overtones, 24, 25 ; influence on harmony, 26, 27

Paganism in music, 372, 375, 412
Palestrina, 361–378; quotation from *Missa Papæ Marcelli*, 43–45; difference between his contrapuntal compositions and Bach's, 47
Paradise and the Peri overture, 425–6
Parry, C. H. H., opinion on "brilliant passages," 62
Parsifal, 410, 411
Passion oratorio, Handel's, 128
Passion, St. Matthew, Bach's, 212
Pedal organ, insufficiency of, in English organs, 175, 446; importance of, in Bach's organ works, 191, 193; solo for, by Bach, 449
Pedal-playing, Bach's facility in, 176; method of, 448–50
Percussion instruments, 97, 98
Philistinism, two opposite forms of, 355
Phillips, lines to Cuzzoni, 123
Pianoforte, Mozart's compositions for, 256–7, 296; Beethoven's compositions for, 295–8; recitals, 297; characteristics as an instrument, 339–40, 420–1; Chopin's treatment of, 338, 340–43; Sterndale Bennett's treatment of, 420–21
Pianoforte-playing, Beethoven's views on, 299
Pipes (organ), 435–6
Pizzicato, 101
Poetic basis, 309, 311, 398–9
Pole, Dr., *Story of Mozart's Requiem*, 245, 246
Polonaises, Chopin's, 346–8
Pre-Raffaelites, their principles compared to Wagner's, 412–13
Programme music, 105–7; absurdities of, 398
Progress heresy, the, 312
Proportion in pitch, 7, 8
Purcell, 129, 130, 134, 416-17

Quin, remark on Handel, 268

Ramann's biography of Liszt, 349, 353, 357
Ranelagh, Handel's concerts at, 125
Reeves, Sims, singing of Handel's songs, 131, 143
Relation between the music and the instrument, 103
Requiem, Mozart's, 3, 244–251; Cherubini's, 307
Rheinberger, 462
Rheingold, 408
Rhythm, an essential quality of musical tone, 4, 5; in composition, 5; importance of, denied by Wagner, 372, 377–8
Rienzi, 369
Ries, on horn passage in *Eroica* Symphony, 275; his cadenza to Beethoven's Concerto, 299–300; anecdote of Beethoven, 302
Rinaldo, 119, 137
Ring des Nibelungen, 376, 389–90; absurdities of, 391–2; Leitmotifs in, 406–7; "real horse" in, 410
Ritter (Professor), *History of Music*, 365
Ritter, A. G., 462
Rodelinda, 137
Rondo Form, 72, 73
Rossini, resemblances to Handel, 115; Beethoven's estimate of, 306–7; his carelessness as to libretti, 320; his sarcasm on the Jewish composers, 370; his *crescendos* compared with Wagner's, 408

Saint-Saëns, 177, 463; his Rhapsodie in E, 445
Salomé, 463
Samson, 146, 147, 148, 214
Sand, George, and Chopin, 333, 336–7; her repudiation of Voltaire's view of Art, 222
Saul, 125, 138, 147
Scale, modern, 14, 15; Greek, 16; an artificial creation, 18; major and minor compared, 19; chromatic, 22, 23, 33
Scherzo, introduced by Beethoven, 87; of the C minor Symphony, 101, 278; of the Pastoral Symphony, 282–3; of the Ninth Symphony, 103, 288; of the Seventh Symphony, 397
Schindler's *Life of Beethoven*, 264, 304, 305
Schoelcher, *Life of Handel*, 112
SCHUBERT, 314; his artistic character, 317–18; childhood, 318–19; want of intellectual culture, 319–20; social character and habits, 321–2; songs, 323–5; his instrumental compositions over-rated, 325–26; vain repetitions, 327; mannerisms, 328; want of coherent structure, 328–9; Beethoven's estimate of him, 306
Schumann, *Forest Scenes*, 107; on one of Bach's chorale preludes, 175; on the organ, 456

Scoring, examples of, 99, 101
Semele, 134
Senesino, 122, 123, 124, 136
Seventh, chord of, 35 ; its use a mannerism with Bach, 214
Shikaneder, 240, 241
Side drums, 98
Siegfried, Funeral March in, 406
Siegmund and Sieglinde, scene between, 409
Smart, Henry, 463
Solomon, 149
Sonata, defined, 71 ; Beethoven's sonatas (generally), 298 ; Beethoven's Op. 90, 60 ; *Pathétique*, 73 ; in A flat, 74–5 ; in D minor, 257 ; Op. 7, 73, 298 ; Op. 22, 298 ; *Waldstein*, 298, Rondo of, 89–91 ; in E flat, 298 ; last Sonata, 298 ; Bennett's *Maid of Orleans*, 425 ; Mozart's, in A minor, 257 ; Mendelssohn's, for organ, 169, 452, 460–62 ; Schubert's, in G, 328
Sonata form, 50, 71–72
Sorcerer, The, 102
Spencer, Herbert, theory of origin of music, 2
Spitta, Dr., as biographer of Bach, 156–57, 160, 161, 162 ; on organ music, 165, 167 ; critical remarks on Bach's organ music, 201
St. Ann's Fugue, 183, 192
St. Matthew Passion, 212
St. Paul, 144, 149
Steele, in opposition to Handel, 120
Steffani, 117
Steibelt, meeting with Beethoven, 266
Stops (of an organ), 431 ; diagram of, 434 ; list of (for fifty-stop organ), 437
Strauss, Dr., on Don Juan, 238
String quartett, 103, 104 ; Beethoven's Op. 59, 48 ; of the orchestra, 96
Strings, 95, 96
Structure, analogy of music with, 12, 13, 39, 40 ; modern form of, 41
Subject, principal and second, 58
Suites des pièces, 48, 49
Sullivan, Sir A., *In Memoriam* overture, 465
Sulzer, on opera (quoted by Ritter), 365
Symphonic poems, Liszt's, 354
Symphony, Beethoven's, in D, 273 ; *Eroica*, 273–7 ; Fourth, 277 ; Fifth, 87, 278-9, 310 ; Pastoral, 19, 101, 280–84 ; Seventh, 284–5, *allegretto* of, 260, 380, analysed, 76–84, *scherzo* of, 397 ; Eighth, 260, 285-6 ; Ninth, 286–293, 310–11, 393 ; Mozart's, in G minor, 56–71, 231, 259 ; in E flat, 231, 260 ; in C, 259, 260, 263, second subject of, 59, 259 ; under Mozart and Beethoven, 263–4 ; Widor's, for organ and orchestra, 465

Tannhäuser, 375 ; overture to, 391
Tausig, "derangement" of Bach's organ Toccata for piano, 200
Te Deum, Dettingen, 134, 140 ; Urio's, 134 ; Purcell's, 417
Telemann, 114
Temperament, equal and unequal, 205
Ternary form, 72, 73
Thalberg, 206, 333 ; compared with Liszt, 350–1
Theodora, 146, 149
Thomyris, 118
Timbre, 41, 94, 95
Toccata, 197 ; Bach's, in F, 193, 197–200 ; in Doric mode, 200 ; in D minor, 200
Triangle, 98
Trio, in organ music, 169 ; Beethoven's Op. 1, 270
Tristan und Isolde, 376, 382–9 ; telegraphic description of, 386 ; love-scene in, 409
Trombone, 97, 102
Trumpet, 96, 97, 99
Tuning, difficulties of, on keyed instrument, 23
Twelfth Mass, 245

Urio, 134

Van Eyken, 462
Variations Form, 72, 73
"Vater Unser," harmonised by Mendelssohn, 169
Vibrations, diagram of, 16
Voltaire, view of Art, 222

WAGNER, 359 ; early relations with England, 362 ; attracted by French opera, 369 ; quits "that frivolous institution," 370 ; preference for mythical subjects, 370 ; aims at union of music and poetry, 371 ; opinions on rhythm and melody, 372–4 ; gradual development of his idea, 374–6 ; criticism of his theory, 377–82 ; *Tristan und Isolde*, 382–389 ; *Ring des Nibelungen*, 389–92 ; not the true

successor of Beethoven, 392–95 ; falsity of the "poetic basis" theory, 395–99 ; Wagnerite intolerance, 399–400 ; the truth about Wagner, 401–2 ; compared with Gluck, 403, 404 ; want of constructive power, 405–6 ; stage absurdities, 409–10 ; summary of the position, 411–13
Walpole, Horace, sneers at Handel, 126
Water Music, 120
Weber, Beethoven's estimate of, 306
Weber, Gottfried, 248
Wedding March, coda of, 76
Widor, 463 ; symphonies for organ and orchestra, 465
Wind instruments, 96, 97 ; Haydn's comment on, 220
Woman of Samaria, 418, 421–2

"Ye banks and braes," melody of, as an example of form, 54

Zachau, 113, 117
Zauberflöte, Die, 240–1

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